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First Edition
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FOREWORD

Why This Book Exists

I'm writing this in a small room with a laptop I saved months to buy.

Outside, I can hear the sounds of a neighborhood waking up—vendors calling out, motorcycles revving, someone's pressure cooker whistling in the distance. The fan above me rotates slowly, doing its best against the April heat.

I'm fifteen years old.

A year ago, I didn't know if I'd be alive till now.

This book exists because I kept a promise to myself during the worst nights of my life. I promised that if I ever made it out—if I ever found solid ground beneath my feet again—I would tell the truth about what it actually takes to build something from nothing.

Not the polished version.

Not the highlight reel.

The real story.

The one with electricity cuts and empty stomachs and panic attacks at 2 AM. The one where success doesn't arrive like a lightning bolt but crawls toward you slowly, covered in rejection letters and failed attempts.

I'm not writing this because I've "made it."

I'm writing this because I'm still in the middle of making it, and I think that's exactly when the most honest stories get told.

Most business books are written by people looking backward from the mountaintop. They can see the entire path clearly now, so they describe it as if it was always obvious. They talk about their struggles, sure, but those struggles feel like checkboxes in a hero's journey—necessary plot points that were always going to lead to victory.

This book is different.

I'm still climbing. I can't see the top. Some days I'm not even sure there is a top.

But I can tell you exactly what the rocks feel like under my hands right now. I can tell you what it's like to be cold and scared and determined all at once. I can tell you what it feels like to sign your first client, to hear your mother's relief when money finally comes in, to realize that maybe—just maybe—you're going to survive this.

When I first thought about writing this book, I was terrified.

Who was I to write a book? I dropped out of ninth grade. I don't have a degree. I don't have investors. I don't have some massive exit or viral success story.

What I have is this: I know what it's like to start with less than nothing and still refuse to stop.

I know what it's like to teach yourself everything because no one else is coming to teach you.

I know what it's like to cold call 500 businesses and get rejected by ninety-nine percent of them.

I know what it's like to lose your father and still have to work the next day because rent doesn't care about your grief.

And I know what it's like to finally—*finally*—sign that first client and feel like maybe you're not completely insane for believing this could work.

If you've ever felt like the world wasn't built for people like you, this book is for you.

If you've ever started something with no money, no connections, and no backup plan, this book is for you.

If you've ever wondered whether pain could become purpose, this book is for you.

I need to be clear about something upfront.

This book will not teach you how to get rich quick.

It will not promise you that if you follow ten simple steps, success will fall into your lap.

It will not pretend that entrepreneurship is some romantic adventure where the good guys always win.

What this book *will* do is show you what actually happens when a teenager with nothing but internet access and a disgusting amount of **delusion** decides to build a business.

It will show you the mistakes. The failures. The moments I wanted to quit.

It will also show you the small victories. The lessons learned at 3 AM. The philosophy that kept me moving forward when nothing else made sense.

Some of what I'll share is painful. Some of it is technical. Some of it is just… honest.

I've tried to write in a way that anyone can understand—whether you're thirteen or thirty or sixty. I've tried to make you *feel* what I felt, not just know what happened.

Because facts are easy to forget.

Feelings stay with you.

One more thing before we begin.

This book is dedicated to three people:

My mother, who escaped with me twice and never once suggested we give up.

My father, whose loss taught me that life doesn't wait for you to be ready.

And my grandmother, who I wish I'd spent more time with before it was too late.

If you're reading this, thank you.

Thank you for giving a fifteen-year-old dropout the chance to tell his story.

Thank you for believing that maybe—just maybe—there's something here worth your time.

Now let me take you back to where it all began.

Not to the rented room or the first client or the moment I dropped out of school.

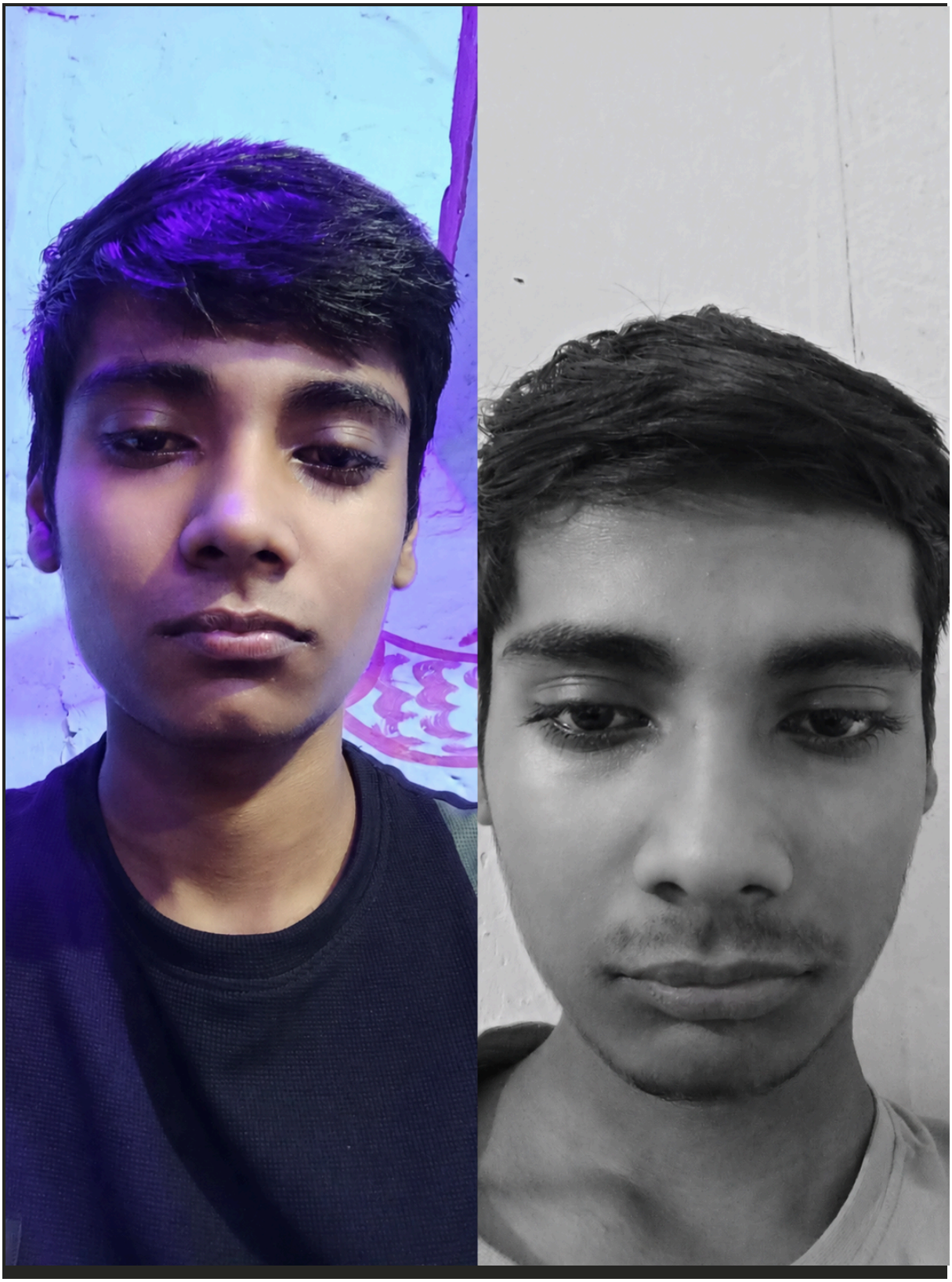
Further back.

To a childhood that never quite felt normal.

To a kid who learned early that if he wanted something different, he'd have to teach himself how to build it.

Let's start there.

— Aryan Srivastav
April 2026



A collage of me showing my face before vs after locking in

INTRODUCTION

The Room With No Light

There's a specific kind of darkness that comes with poverty.

It's not poetic. It's not the dramatic darkness of a movie where the hero sits in shadow contemplating his next move while moody music plays.

It's the darkness that comes when the electricity gets cut off again and you're trying to finish a cold call script on your phone at eleven percent battery, and you know that if this doesn't work—if you don't figure something out in the next seventy-two hours—you're not sure what happens next.

That's where I'm starting this story.

Not at the beginning.

At the bottom.

December 2025.

I'm sitting on a thin mattress placed directly on the floor of a rented room so small you could touch both walls if you stretched your arms out.

The paint is peeling. There's a single bulb hanging from the ceiling, but it's useless right now because the power's been out for three hours.

My back hurts. It always hurts these days. Sleeping on a mattress with no bed frame does that.

My mother is in the corner, trying to sleep. I can hear her breathing—slow, deliberate, the kind of breathing that tells me she's not actually asleep, just pretending so I don't worry.

I'm staring at my phone screen.

I've been staring at it for forty minutes, reading the same business article over and over, not because I don't understand it, but because I'm trying to absorb every single word like my life depends on it.

Because maybe it does.

If you'd told me six months earlier that this is where I'd be, I wouldn't have believed you.

Six months earlier, I was still in school. Still living at home. Still believing that maybe things would somehow work out on their own.

But life doesn't work that way.

Life doesn't wait for you to be ready. It doesn't give you a manual. It doesn't send a notification saying, "Hey, everything's about to fall apart, so maybe prepare yourself."

It just happens.

One day you're a kid learning binary trading on YouTube while sitting in your school uniform.

The next day you're packing everything you own into two bags and leaving in the middle of the night.

And then, somehow, you're here.

In a room with no light.

Trying to figure out how a fifteen-year-old with no degree, no experience, and no connections is supposed to build something that matters.

I want to be very clear about something before we go any further.

This is not a rags-to-riches story.

At least, not yet.

I don't know how this story ends. I'm still living it.

What I *can* tell you is how it begins, how it nearly ends, and how I'm still here despite everything.

I can tell you about the trading profits that bought my mother her first smartphone.

I can tell you about the night we left home and didn't look back.

I can tell you about the day we escaped a second time, bags stuffed into a hesitant cab driver's trunk, hearts pounding, waiting to see if we'd actually make it out.

I can tell you about losing my father in December and still having to wake up the next morning and make cold calls because grief is a luxury you can't afford when you're trying to survive.

I can tell you about the platforms that banned me, the KYC verifications that failed, the doors that closed in my face over and over again until I stopped counting.

And I can tell you about the first client.

The one who said yes when ninety-nine others said no.

The ₹2,000 that felt like ₹2 million because it meant I wasn't insane. It meant this could actually work.

But before we get to any of that, I need to take you back.

Back to a childhood that didn't feel like other kids' childhoods.

Back to a home where tension lived in the walls and you learned to read the room before you even walked into it.

Back to the version of me who didn't know yet that he'd have to teach himself everything—not because he wanted to, but because no one else was going to do it for him.

That's where this story really starts.

Not in the room with no light.

In the years before the lights went out.

I'm going to tell you everything.

The good, the bad, the uncomfortable, the painful.

I'm going to tell you about the moments I'm proud of and the moments I wish I could redo.

I'm going to tell you what I learned about business, about survival, about building something when the world tells you you're too young, too broke, too unqualified.

And I'm going to tell you why I believe that sometimes the people who start with the least have the clearest vision of what actually matters.

Because when you've lost everything, you stop worrying about looking stupid.

You stop caring what people think.

You just build.

This book is for anyone who's ever felt like they were starting from behind.

For anyone who's been told they're not ready, not qualified, not enough.

For anyone who's ever had to choose between giving up and taking one more step into the dark, hoping—just hoping—that solid ground exists somewhere ahead.

If that's you, keep reading.

Because I promise you this: if I can do it, you can too.

Not because I'm special.

But because I refused to stop.

Let me show you how.

Now let's go back to the beginning.

PART ONE: BEFORE THE FALL

CHAPTER 1

A Childhood That Didn't Feel Normal

I don't remember a time when home felt safe.

That's not something I say for dramatic effect. It's just the truth.

Some kids grow up and their earliest memories are of birthday parties or family trips or lazy Sunday mornings. My earliest memories are of silence—the kind of silence that means everyone's trying not to set someone off.

You learn to read a room very quickly when you grow up like that.

You learn to notice the small signs. The tone of a voice. The way someone closes a door. Whether footsteps are calm or agitated.

You develop a radar.

And you become very, very good at staying out of the way.

I was born in 2009 in India—Uttar Pradesh, to be specific.

If you're not familiar with India, Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in the country. If it were its own nation, it would be the fifth most populous in the world. It's loud, crowded, chaotic, beautiful, and brutal all at once.

I grew up in a middle-class household, or at least that's what it would have looked like from the outside.

We had a house. We had food. I went to school.

But inside those walls, things were different.

There was always tension.

Always conflict simmering just below the surface, ready to boil over at any moment.

I won't go into specifics about every argument or every incident. That's not what this book is about, and honestly, some things are too personal to lay out in detail.

What I will say is this: I learned very young that the world doesn't stop just because your home life is hard.

School still happened. Homework still needed to be done. Life still moved forward.

And so I moved with it, even when I wanted to stop.

School was... fine.

I wasn't a bad student. I wasn't a great one either.

I showed up. I did the work. I passed the tests.

But I was never one of those kids who felt like school was *for* them, you know?

It always felt like I was being taught things that didn't connect to anything real. Equations I'd never use. Dates I'd forget the day after the exam. Information that existed in a vacuum, disconnected from the actual world.

And the whole time, I kept thinking: *There has to be more than this.*

I didn't know what the "more" was yet.

But I knew it wasn't in those textbooks.

The internet saved me.

I know that sounds dramatic, but it's true.

When home felt unbearable and school felt pointless, I had the internet.

I had YouTube.

I had forums and articles and videos made by people thousands of miles away who were teaching things that actually mattered to me.

I started spending hours online—not on social media or games, but learning.

I'd fall into rabbit holes.

One day it would be video editing tutorials. The next day, graphic design. Then coding basics. Then business models. Then marketing psychology.

I didn't have a plan. I was just curious.

But that curiosity became a lifeline.

It became the thing that made me realize the world was bigger than the four walls I was living in.

I think that's when I started to change.

Not all at once. Not in some dramatic overnight transformation.

But slowly, I began to understand something important:

No one was coming to save me.

Not a teacher. Not a mentor. Not some lucky break.

If I wanted something different, I was going to have to build it myself.

And if I didn't know how to build it, I was going to have to teach myself.

That realization didn't make me feel empowered at first.

It made me feel terrified.

Because I was just a kid. I didn't know anything. I didn't have money or connections or experience.

But I had time.

And I had the internet.

And I had something else too—something I didn't even recognize yet.

I had stubbornness.

The kind of stubbornness that comes from growing up in chaos and deciding that you'd rather fail trying than succeed at staying stuck.

Looking back now, I can see that my entire childhood was preparing me for what was coming.

It was teaching me resilience without calling it that.

It was teaching me how to function when everything around me was unstable.

It was teaching me that comfort is a luxury, and if you wait for perfect conditions before you start building, you'll wait forever.

But I didn't know any of that at the time.

At the time, I just wanted things to be easier.

I wanted to feel normal.

I wanted a home that felt like the homes I saw in movies—the ones where families sat around the dinner table and talked about their day and actually seemed happy to be in the same room.

But that's not what I had.

So instead, I learned to create my own world.

A world made of pixels and possibilities.

A world where I could control something, even if it was just what I chose to learn that day.

And slowly, piece by piece, that world started to feel more real than the one I was living in.

By the time I hit eighth grade, I knew I didn't want a traditional path.

I didn't want to spend the next decade in classrooms, memorizing things for exams, hoping that a degree would somehow lead to a job that would somehow lead to a life.

I wanted to build.

I wanted to create.

I wanted to prove that you didn't need permission to start.

The problem was, I had no idea how.

I was still just a kid in school, stuck in a cycle I didn't know how to break.

And then, in early 2025, I discovered something that changed everything.

Binary trading.

I didn't know it then, but that discovery was about to set off a chain of events that would completely reshape my life.

Some of those events would be incredible.

Some would be devastating.

But all of them—every single one—would teach me something I needed to know.

Let me tell you what happened next.

LESSONS I LEARNED

1. Your environment doesn't define your future—but it does teach you lessons.

I didn't choose the home I grew up in. None of us do. But I did choose what I learned from it. Chaos taught me adaptability. Instability taught me resilience. Silence taught me observation.

Whatever your circumstances are right now, ask yourself: *What is this teaching me?*

2. Curiosity is a survival tool.

When I started diving into YouTube tutorials and online courses, I wasn't thinking, "This will help me build a business one day." I was just curious. But that curiosity gave me skills, knowledge, and most importantly—hope. Never underestimate the power of learning something just because it interests you.

3. No one is coming to save you. And that's okay.

This sounds harsh, but it's liberating once you accept it. The moment you stop waiting for someone to fix your situation is the moment you can start fixing it yourself. You might not have the resources yet. You might not know the path. But you have agency. And that's where everything begins.

4. Normal is overrated.

I spent years wishing my life looked like everyone else's. I wanted the stability, the simplicity, the ease. But the truth is, "normal" often means safe. And safe often means stuck. My abnormal childhood forced me to think differently, to build differently, to see opportunities others missed. Sometimes the hardest roads lead to the most interesting destinations.

Next: Chapter 2 — Teaching Myself Everything

is?"

I explained. Told her about the trading. About the learning. About the wins and losses.

She didn't say much.

But I saw something in her eyes.

Pride, maybe.

Or relief.

Or hope that maybe—just maybe—I was going to be okay.

That moment changed something in me.

It wasn't just about the money.

It was about realizing that what I learned could translate into real-world impact.

I could use skills to create value.

I could use value to improve life—mine, and the people I cared about.

That phone wasn't just a gift.

It was proof.

Proof that self-education worked.

Proof that I didn't need to follow the traditional path.

Proof that if I kept learning, kept building, kept pushing, I could actually create the life I wanted.

But even as I felt that hope rising, I had no idea what was coming.

I had no idea that in just a few months, everything would fall apart.

That the home I was living in—unstable as it was—would disappear.

That I'd be making life-or-death decisions at fifteen years old.

That all the skills I'd taught myself would stop being a hobby and become a necessity.

I didn't know any of that yet.

All I knew was that I'd taught myself something real.

And that felt like enough.

For now.

LESSONS I LEARNED

1. Self-education is a superpower—but only if you actually execute.

You can watch a thousand videos and read a hundred books, but knowledge without action is just entertainment. The moment I moved from learning *about* trading to actually *placing trades*, everything changed. Consumption is comfortable. Creation is where growth happens.

2. You don't need to master something before you start.

I wasn't an expert when I made my first trade. I wasn't even good. But I was good *enough* to start. And starting is what taught me everything the videos couldn't. Waiting until you feel "ready" is just another form of procrastination.

3. Small wins build momentum.

That first ₹350 profit didn't change my life financially. But psychologically? It changed everything. It proved that this wasn't just theory. It was real. Never underestimate the power of a small win to fuel the next step.

4. The best education is the one you give yourself.

No teacher was going to show me how to trade binary options. No school was going to teach me marketing or business models. I had to take responsibility for my own learning. And once I did, I realized that I could learn anything. That realization is worth more than any degree.

5. Let your work speak before your words do.

I didn't tell my mother what I was doing until I could show her the result. That phone was my proof. In business and in life, results will always speak louder than promises. Build first. Talk later.

Next: Chapter 3 — The Trading Experiment

The Trading Experiment

The thing about binary trading is that it feels like a video game until it doesn't.

When you're watching the charts, analyzing patterns, predicting movements—it's almost fun. There's a rush to it. A sense of control.

But the moment real money is on the line, everything changes.

Suddenly every decision matters. Every click could mean profit or loss. Every second feels heavier than it should.

And when you're fourteen years old, still wearing a school uniform every morning, that weight sits differently.

It was March 2025 when I first started taking trading seriously.

I was still attending school at this point. Still waking up at six in the morning, getting dressed, sitting through seven periods of classes that felt increasingly irrelevant.

But the moment I got home, I'd drop my bag, grab something to eat, and open my laptop.

That's when my real day began.

The teachers at school were teaching me about the Mughal Empire and quadratic equations.

The internet was teaching me about market psychology and risk-reward ratios.

I knew which one felt more useful.

I started with a demo account, like I mentioned before.

For those who don't know, a demo account lets you trade with fake money. You get the full experience—real charts, real market movements, real trade execution—but none of the actual risk.

It's a safe way to learn.

And I needed that safety at first because I had no idea what I was doing.

The first week, I lost every single trade.

Not because the market was against me.

Because I didn't understand what I was looking at.

I'd see a candlestick pattern and think, "Okay, this looks like it's going up," and then it would immediately go down.

I'd place a trade based on a feeling, not a strategy.

And feelings, I quickly learned, are a terrible way to trade.

But I didn't quit.

Every time I lost, I'd go back and watch more videos. Read more articles. Study the trades I'd made and try to figure out where I went wrong.

I started keeping a journal—just a simple notebook where I'd write down every trade, why I made it, and what the result was.

That journal became one of my most valuable tools.

Because when you write something down, you have to think about it differently. You can't lie to yourself. You can't pretend you knew what you were doing when you didn't.

The page doesn't let you get away with that.

So I'd write:

"Placed a call option because I saw three green candles in a row. Lost. Didn't wait for confirmation. Emotional decision."

Or:

"Placed a put option after spotting a bearish engulfing pattern. Won. Waited for the pattern to complete before entering. This is the right approach."

Slowly, patterns started to emerge.

Not just in the charts.

In my own behavior.

I started to see when I was trading from logic and when I was trading from emotion.

And I started to understand that the difference between those two things was the difference between winning and losing.

By early April, I felt ready to move from the demo account to a real account.

I'd saved up around ₹3,000 from birthday money and small amounts my mother had given me over the months.

It wasn't much.

But it was enough to start.

I remember the first time I deposited money into my trading account. My hands were shaking as I entered the payment details.

This was real now.

If I messed this up, I wouldn't just lose fake demo money.

I'd lose actual savings.

But I also knew that if I never made the jump from practice to real, I'd never actually learn.

Because trading with fake money doesn't teach you the most important lesson: how to handle your emotions when something real is at stake.

My first real trade was terrifying.

I put ₹500 on a call option—predicting that the price of an asset would go up within the next five minutes.

I'd done my analysis. I'd seen the pattern. I'd waited for confirmation.

Everything pointed to this being a good trade.

But as I watched the timer count down, my heart was pounding so hard I thought I might pass out.

What if I was wrong?

What if I'd misread the chart?

What if this whole thing was just luck and I was about to lose everything?

The last ten seconds felt like an hour.

And then the timer hit zero.

I won.

₹850.

I'd just made ₹350 in five minutes.

I stared at the screen, not quite processing it.

Then I closed my laptop, walked to the other room, and just sat there for a while, trying to calm down.

It wasn't the money that shook me.

It was the realization that this actually worked.

That I'd learned something real. Something valuable. Something that could generate actual income.

At fourteen.

From my bedroom.

With nothing but an internet connection.

Of course, I didn't win every trade after that.

The next day, I lost ₹600.

The day after that, I won ₹400.

Then lost ₹300.

Then won ₹700.

It was a rollercoaster.

Some days I'd finish up ₹1,000 and feel like a genius.

Other days I'd finish down ₹800 and feel like the biggest idiot alive.

The emotional swings were brutal.

Trading does something to your brain. It messes with your sense of control.

You start thinking you've figured it out, and then the market humbles you immediately.

You start believing you're smarter than everyone else, and then you lose three trades in a row and remember you're not.

It teaches you very quickly that confidence without discipline is just arrogance.

And arrogance gets expensive fast.

But over time, I started to improve.

Not because I suddenly became a trading genius.

But because I started treating it like a skill instead of a gamble.

I set rules for myself:

Never risk more than 5% of my account on a single trade.

Never trade when I'm emotional—angry, upset, or overconfident.

Never chase losses. If I lose two trades in a row, I stop for the day.

Always analyze my trades afterward, win or lose.

These rules saved me.

Because trading isn't about being right all the time.

It's about managing risk so that when you're wrong, it doesn't destroy you, and when you're right, it actually matters.

By the end of April, I'd made around ₹5,000 in profit.

May was even better—around ₹6,000.

June was rough. I got overconfident, broke my own rules, and lost about ₹2,000.

That hurt.

Not just financially, but emotionally.

I felt like I'd let myself down. Like I'd proven that maybe I wasn't as disciplined as I thought.

But instead of quitting, I went back to my journal.

I read through my trades. I identified the mistakes. I reminded myself of the rules I'd created.

And I started again.

July was better. Then August.

By the end of August, I'd made around ₹20,000–₹25,000 total over those five months.

After accounting for losses and keeping some money in my trading account, I had about ₹15,000 that I could actually use.

That's when I bought my mother the phone.

I've already told you about that moment, but I need you to understand what it meant.

It wasn't just a gift.

It was proof—to her, and to myself—that I wasn't wasting my time.

That all those hours spent learning, failing, adjusting, and trying again had actually produced something real.

Something tangible.

Something valuable.

I also bought a few things for myself. Nothing extravagant. Just small things I'd wanted for a while but could never afford.

A decent pair of headphones.

Some books.

A few pieces of clothing that weren't falling apart.

It felt good.

Not because of the things themselves, but because I'd earned them.

Nobody had given me an allowance.

Nobody had handed me money out of pity.

I'd learned a skill, applied it, and created value.

And that—*that*—felt incredible.

But even as I enjoyed those small wins, I was already thinking ahead.

I knew I couldn't rely on binary trading forever.

The markets were unpredictable. One bad week could wipe out a month of progress.

I needed something more stable. Something I could build over time.

So I started saving for a laptop.

Not just any laptop—a proper one that could handle more than just trading charts.

Something I could use to learn video editing, coding, graphic design.

Something that could become a tool for building a real business.

I set a goal: ₹30,000.

It felt massive at the time.

But I'd already proven I could make money from nothing.

So why not do it again?

Looking back now, I realize that those months of trading were about more than just making money.

They were about proving to myself that I could do hard things.

That I could learn without a teacher.

That I could handle failure and keep going.

That I could turn an idea into action, and action into results.

I didn't know it then, but I was building the foundation for everything that would come next.

The discipline. The resilience. The belief that if I didn't know how to do something, I could figure it out.

Those lessons would save my life in the months ahead.

Because in just a few weeks, my world was about to collapse.

And when it did, the skills I'd taught myself would stop being a hobby.

They'd become the only thing standing between survival and surrender.

LESSONS I LEARNED

The gap between theory and practice is where real learning happens. I could have watched trading videos for years and never really understood trading. But the moment I placed my first real trade with actual money on the line, everything I'd learned suddenly clicked into place. You can study business books forever, but until you actually try to sell something, make something, or build something, you're just collecting information. Real education happens when something's at stake.

Emotion is the enemy of good decision-making. The trades I lost weren't because the market was against me. They were because I let my emotions take over. I got greedy after a win and placed a bigger trade than I should have. I got scared after a loss and tried to win it back immediately. Trading taught me that feelings are information, not instructions. You can feel excited or scared or confident, but you can't let those feelings make your decisions for you.

Systems beat motivation every single time. On days when I felt motivated, it was easy to trade well. But motivation is unreliable. It comes and goes. What kept me profitable over time wasn't motivation—it was the rules I created for myself. Never risk more than five percent. Never trade when emotional. Always analyze afterward. These weren't suggestions. They were systems. And systems work even when you don't feel like working.

Small, consistent wins compound into something significant. I didn't make twenty thousand rupees in one lucky trade. I made it through hundreds of small decisions over several months. Five hundred here. A thousand there. Some losses mixed in. But over time, those small wins added up to something that actually mattered. Most people chase the big break, the viral moment, the lottery ticket. But real progress is built through small, consistent actions repeated over time.

Skill is the ultimate form of security. Money can disappear. Opportunities can vanish. Markets can crash. But once you learn a skill—really learn it, practice it, prove you can execute it—no one can take that away from you. That phone I bought my mother wasn't just purchased with money. It was purchased with capability. With the ability to create value from nothing. And that ability would stay with me no matter what happened next.

I had no idea that within weeks, I'd need that ability more than ever.

I had no idea that the home I was living in was about to disappear.

I had no idea that the worst night of my life was coming.

But it was.

And when it arrived, everything I'd taught myself would be put to the test.

Next: Chapter 4 — Buying My Mother a Phone

CHAPTER 4

Buying My Mother a Phone

There are moments in your life that feel small while they're happening but grow larger in memory.
Buying my mother that phone was one of those moments.
At the time, it felt like a simple transaction. I had money. She needed a phone. I bought one.
But looking back now, I realize it was so much more than that.

It was the first time I'd ever been able to give her something without having to ask someone else for help.
The first time my work—my learning, my effort, my risk—translated into something that improved her life.
The first time I felt like maybe I wasn't just a burden.

Her old phone was dying.
I mean that literally. The thing was on its last legs.
The screen had a crack running diagonally across it, splintering into smaller cracks at the edges like a spider web.
The battery would drain from sixty percent to zero in the span of an hour.
Sometimes it would turn off randomly in the middle of a call, and she'd have to restart it two or three times before it would come back on.
She never complained about it.
That's the thing about my mother—she never complained about anything.
Not the phone. Not the financial stress. Not the chaos at home.
She just kept going, quietly holding everything together, pretending like it was all fine.
But I could see the frustration.
I could see it in the way she'd sigh when the phone died mid-conversation.
I could see it in the way she'd squint at the cracked screen, trying to read a message.
I could see it in the way she'd charge it three times a day, hoping it would last just a little longer.
And I hated that I couldn't do anything about it.
Until I could.

By late August 2025, I'd made enough from trading that I had a decision to make.
I could keep all the money for myself—save it for the laptop I wanted, or spend it on things I'd been wanting for months.
Or I could do something that mattered more.
The choice wasn't hard.
I took ₹14,000 from what I'd earned and decided I was going to buy her a new phone.
Not a flagship model. Not something expensive or flashy.
Just something that worked. Something reliable. Something she wouldn't have to fight with every single day.

I didn't tell her what I was planning.
I wanted it to be a surprise.
So one afternoon, after school, I told her I was going to meet a friend, and instead I went to a local electronics shop.

The store was small, crammed with display cases full of phones, tablets, and accessories. The air smelled like new plastic and air conditioning.
A salesman approached me almost immediately.
"Looking for something specific?"
I nodded. "A phone. Budget is around fourteen thousand."
He showed me a few options. Some had better cameras. Some had bigger screens. Some had features I didn't even understand.
But I wasn't looking for the fanciest phone.
I was looking for one that would last.
One that wouldn't die in the middle of the day.
One that she could rely on.
I settled on a decent model—I don't even remember the brand anymore. It wasn't anything special, but it was new, and it worked, and that was enough.
I paid in cash.
The salesman handed me the box, and I tucked it under my arm, heart pounding the entire walk home.

When I got back, my mother was in the kitchen, making tea.
I stood in the doorway for a moment, holding the box, suddenly nervous.
What if she was upset that I'd spent the money?
What if she thought I should have saved it instead?
What if she asked where it came from and didn't believe me?
But I pushed those thoughts aside and walked in.
"I got you something."
She turned around, wiping her hands on a towel, eyebrows raised.
"What?"
I held out the box.
She stared at it for a moment, then at me, then back at the box.
"What is this?"
"A phone. Your old one's falling apart, so I got you a new one."
She didn't take it right away.
Instead, she just looked at me, her expression unreadable.
"Where did you get the money?"
I'd been expecting that question, so I was ready.
I explained everything. The trading. The months of learning. The wins and losses. The gradual profits.
I told her I'd made enough to buy her this and still have money left over.
She was quiet for a long time.
Then she took the box from my hands, opened it slowly, and stared at the phone inside.

I don't think she said much in that moment.
Maybe "Thank you."
Maybe nothing at all.

But I saw something in her face that I hadn't seen in a long time.
Relief.
Pride, maybe.
Or just the realization that I was growing up faster than she'd expected.
She didn't cry or make a big deal out of it.
That wasn't her style.
But she held onto that phone like it was more than just a device.
Like it was proof.
Proof that maybe things were going to be okay.
Proof that I could take care of myself—and her—if I had to.

That night, I lay in bed thinking about what had just happened.
It wasn't a huge gesture. It wasn't some grand, life-changing moment.
But it mattered.
Because for the first time in my life, I'd earned something myself and used it to make someone else's life a little bit easier.
I'd turned knowledge into skill.
Skill into money.
Money into impact.
That sequence—*learn, execute, deliver value*—felt like the most important thing I'd ever discovered.
And I wanted to do it again.
Bigger. Better. More often.

After buying the phone, I still had some money left.
Not a lot, but enough to treat myself to a few small things I'd been wanting.
I bought a pair of headphones—nothing fancy, just decent ones that didn't sound like static.
I bought a couple of books I'd seen recommended online. One about business. One about psychology.
I bought some new clothes because most of what I owned had holes or stains or didn't fit anymore.
None of it was expensive.
But all of it felt earned.
And that made it mean something.

I also started saving seriously for the laptop.
The one I had was slow, barely functional. It took five minutes just to boot up. Programs would freeze constantly. The battery lasted maybe an hour.
If I wanted to keep learning—if I wanted to move beyond just trading and start building real skills in editing, design, coding—I needed something better.
So I set a goal: ₹30,000.
It was more than I'd ever saved before.
But I'd already proven I could make money from nothing.

So why not do it again?
I started putting aside a portion of every profitable trade.
Not all of it—I still needed money to keep trading.
But enough that it would add up over time.
Slowly, the number in my savings started to grow.
₹1,000.
₹2,500.
₹5,000.
Each milestone felt like progress.
Like I was building toward something real.

But even as I was saving, even as I was learning and growing and starting to feel like maybe I had some control over my life, I had no idea what was coming.
I didn't know that in just a few weeks, everything would fall apart.
I didn't know that the home I was living in—unstable as it was—would soon be gone.
I didn't know that I'd be making decisions no fifteen-year-old should have to make.
I didn't know that the skills I was building as a hobby would suddenly become a lifeline.
All I knew was that I'd bought my mother a phone, and it felt good.
It felt like proof that I was capable of something.
And for a little while, that was enough.

But life doesn't let you rest in the good moments for long.
Especially when the bad ones are already on their way.

LESSONS I LEARNED

The best use of money is solving real problems for people you care about. I could have spent that eight thousand rupees on myself. I could have bought games or gadgets or saved it all for my laptop. But buying my mother that phone taught me something crucial about money. Money isn't just a scorecard. It's a tool. And the best way to use it is to solve actual problems. Her phone was broken. I fixed it. That simple transaction changed how I thought about earning. It stopped being about accumulation and started being about impact.
Earning beats receiving every single time. I'd been given money before. Birthday money. Gifts from relatives. But there was something fundamentally different about money I'd earned myself. When you earn something, you own it in a way you never own a gift. You know exactly what it cost you. You know

the hours of learning, the failed trades, the discipline it took to not spend it immediately. That ownership changes how you value it and how you spend it.
Small acts of care carry enormous weight. My mother didn't need an expensive phone. She didn't need the latest model with the best camera. She just needed something that worked. Something reliable. And giving her that—solving that one small, practical problem—meant more than any grand gesture could have. In business and in life, people remember when you solve their real problems, not when you try to impress them.
Generosity and self-investment aren't opposites. Some people think you have to choose. Either you spend money on yourself or you spend it on others. But I did both. I bought her a phone and I still saved for my laptop. I treated myself to headphones and books. Generosity doesn't require martyrdom. You can take care of others and still invest in your own growth. In fact, you have to. Because the better you become, the more you can give.
Proof matters more than promises. I could have told my mother a hundred times that I was going to make money and take care of her. But words are cheap. That phone was proof. It was evidence that I wasn't just dreaming. I was executing. In a world full of people who talk about what they're going to do, the ones who actually deliver something real are the ones who get remembered. Show, don't tell. Build, don't brag. Results speak louder than intentions ever will.

I wish I could tell you that everything stayed good after that moment.
That buying her that phone marked the beginning of a steady climb upward.
But that's not what happened.
In fact, the opposite was coming.
The worst weeks of my life were just around the corner.
And when they arrived, that phone—and everything it represented—would be one of the few things that reminded me why I had to keep going.

Next: Chapter 5 — Leaving Home

PART TWO: WHEN EVERYTHING COLLAPSED

CHAPTER 5

Leaving Home

October 2025.

That's when everything changed.

Not gradually. Not with warning signs I could have prepared for.

Just suddenly. Violently. Irreversibly.

One day I was a kid living at home, going to school, trading in my free time, thinking about saving for a laptop.

The next day I was packing everything I owned into two bags, wondering where we were going to sleep that night.

I've thought a lot about how to tell this part of the story.

About how much detail to include. How honest to be. How much of the pain to let show through.

Because this is the part where my childhood ended.

Not metaphorically.

Literally.

This is the part where I stopped being a student with dreams and became someone just trying to survive.

And I need you to understand that I'm not exaggerating for effect.

I'm not dramatizing to make the story more interesting.

I'm just telling you what happened.

The conflict had been building for weeks.

The tension at home—the kind I'd lived with my whole life—had reached a breaking point.

I won't go into all the details. Some things are too personal, too painful, too complicated to lay out in a book.

But what I can tell you is this:

There came a night when my mother looked at me and said, "We have to leave."

Not "We should think about leaving."

Not "Maybe someday we'll leave."

Just: "We have to leave. Now."

I remember that night so clearly it feels like it just happened.

We didn't have much time.

My mother moved quickly, pulling out two large bags and starting to pack.

Clothes. Documents. A few personal items.

I stood there for a moment, frozen, my brain trying to catch up with what was happening.

"Are we really doing this?"

She didn't look at me. She just kept packing.

"Yes. Help me."

So I did.

I grabbed whatever I could fit. My laptop—the slow, barely functional one that meant everything to me. Chargers. Notebooks. A few shirts. My headphones.

I didn't think about what I was leaving behind because I didn't have time to think.

I just moved.

Grabbed. Stuffed things into bags. Zipped them up.

My hands were shaking the whole time.

We left in the middle of the night.

I don't remember what time exactly. Late enough that the streets were empty. Early enough that the sky was still dark.

We didn't say goodbye to anyone.

We didn't leave a note.

We just walked out the door, each carrying a bag, and started moving.

I remember looking back once.

At the house I'd grown up in.

At the place that had never really felt like home but had at least been familiar.

And then I turned around and kept walking.

We took an auto-rickshaw to a different part of town.

My mother had found a small rented room through someone she knew. I don't know how she'd arranged it or when. Maybe she'd been planning this for longer than I realized.

The ride felt like it took hours, even though it was probably only twenty minutes.

Neither of us said much.

What was there to say?

We'd just left everything behind.

There was no going back.

When we arrived, I understood immediately that life was about to get a lot harder.

The room was tiny.

And I mean *tiny*.

If you stood in the center and stretched your arms out, you could almost touch both walls.

There was no bed. No furniture. Just a thin mattress on the floor, a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling, and a small bathroom in the corner.

The walls were stained. The paint was peeling. There was a faint smell of dampness that never really went away.

This was home now.

That first night, I couldn't sleep.

I lay on the mattress—which was so thin I could feel the hard floor beneath it—and stared at the ceiling.

My mother was next to me, breathing slowly, but I knew she wasn't asleep either.

We were both just lying there in the dark, processing what had just happened.

I kept thinking: *What now?*

We'd left. We'd escaped. We were safe, for the moment.

But what came next?

How were we going to survive?

How was I going to go to school from here?

How were we going to pay rent?

The questions piled up in my mind, one after another, until I felt like I couldn't breathe.

The next morning, reality set in.

My mother sat me down and explained the situation as clearly as she could.

Money was going to be extremely tight.

We had a little saved, but not much. Enough for a couple months of rent, maybe, if we were careful.

She'd try to find work, but it wasn't going to be easy.

And as for me...

She didn't say it directly, but I understood.

School wasn't a priority anymore.

Survival was.

That's when I dropped out.

Not officially, at first. I just stopped going.

I stopped waking up early. Stopped putting on the uniform. Stopped pretending that sitting in a classroom learning about the Pythagorean theorem mattered when I didn't know if we'd have food next week.

It wasn't a dramatic decision.

There was no moment where I stood up and declared, "I'm done with school."

I just... stopped.

And my mother didn't push me to go back.

She knew.

She knew that right now, we needed to focus on surviving, not on education.

The irony wasn't lost on me.

I'd spent months teaching myself skills outside of school, learning things that actually felt useful.

And now, when school was no longer an option, those skills were all I had left.

The first few weeks in that room were some of the hardest of my life.

We had almost nothing.

No proper bed. No desk. No storage.

We kept our clothes in the bags we'd brought them in.

We ate cheap food—rice, dal, whatever we could afford.

Sometimes we skipped meals to make the money last longer.

The electricity would cut out randomly, sometimes for hours.

The water supply was inconsistent. Some days we'd have running water. Other days we wouldn't.

I'd wake up in the morning with back pain from sleeping on that thin mattress.

I'd spend the day in that tiny room, feeling the walls closing in, trying to figure out what to do next.

But here's the thing.

I didn't give up.

Even in that room, even with everything falling apart, I kept working.

I still had my laptop.

I still had internet access—shaky and unreliable, but it was there.

And I still had the skills I'd taught myself.

So I kept trading when I could.

I kept learning.

I started exploring other ways to make money online.

Copywriting. Freelancing. Outreach.

Most of it didn't work, at least not at first.

But I kept trying.

Because what else was I going to do?

Sit there and feel sorry for myself?

Wait for someone to rescue us?

No.

I'd already learned that no one was coming.

If we were going to survive this, it was going to be because I figured out how to make it happen.

Looking back now, I realize that October 2025 was the turning point.

Not because things got better.

But because I stopped waiting for life to get easier.

I stopped expecting things to work out on their own.

I stopped believing that someone, somewhere, would step in and fix everything.

Instead, I accepted the truth:

This was my reality now.

And the only way out was through.

I won't pretend I was brave during those weeks.

I wasn't.

I was terrified most of the time.

Terrified that we'd run out of money.

Terrified that my mother would get sick and I wouldn't be able to help her.

Terrified that I'd fail at everything I tried and we'd end up on the street.

But fear doesn't stop time.

It doesn't pause rent.

It doesn't make food appear.

So even though I was scared, I kept moving.

One day at a time.

One small action at a time.

There's a phrase I came across later that perfectly describes how I felt during that time:

"Defeat the defeat before the defeat defeats you."

I didn't know those words yet, but I was living them.

Every morning I'd wake up in that tiny room and feel the weight of everything pressing down on me.

And every morning I'd push it aside and open my laptop.

Because the alternative—giving in, giving up, letting the defeat win—wasn't an option.

Not for me.

Not for my mother.

We'd come too far to quit now.

But just when I thought we'd found some stability, just when I thought maybe we could survive in that little room, something happened that I didn't see coming.

My father found us.

And suddenly, everything got complicated again.

LESSONS I LEARNED

Sometimes the bravest thing you can do is walk away. Leaving that house wasn't giving up. It was survival. There's a difference between quitting and recognizing when a situation is destroying you. Knowing when to walk away from something toxic—a relationship, a job, a environment—isn't weakness. It's wisdom. And it takes more courage than staying ever will.

Your circumstances don't define your capacity. I was living in a room where I could touch both walls. We were skipping meals. The electricity cut out constantly. But I still had my laptop and I still had my mind. I've learned that capability isn't determined by your environment. It's determined by your willingness to work with whatever you have. Some of the most successful people in history built empires from prison cells, hospital beds, and tiny apartments. What matters isn't where you start. It's whether you start at all.

Survival requires ruthless prioritization. School stopped mattering the moment we left home. That sounds harsh, but it's true. When you're in survival mode, you can't afford to pretend everything is equally important. You have to look at your life and ask: what actually matters right now? What keeps us alive? What moves us forward? Everything else becomes noise. Learning that skill—the ability to ruthlessly prioritize—has served me more than any lesson I learned in a classroom.

Action is the only antidote to helplessness. Those first few nights in that room, I felt completely powerless. We'd lost our home. I'd lost my education. The future looked terrifying and uncertain. But the moment I opened my laptop and started working again, something shifted. I couldn't control what had happened to us. But I could control what I did next. And that small sense of agency—that tiny bit of control—was enough to keep me from drowning in despair.

Hardship reveals what you're actually made of. When life is comfortable, it's easy to imagine yourself as strong, resilient, capable. But you don't really know until everything falls apart. Those weeks taught me that I was tougher than I thought. Not because I didn't feel scared or overwhelmed. But because I felt all of those things and kept going anyway. Strength isn't the absence of fear. It's continuing to move forward while fear is screaming at you to stop.

We thought the hard part was over.

We thought that by leaving, by finding that room, by starting to rebuild, we'd escaped the worst of it.

We were wrong.

Because a few weeks later, my father found where we were living.

And when he did, everything I thought I understood about survival was about to be tested in ways I never imagined.

PS: If you wanna see me buying my first ever laptop, visit trenches.aryansrivastav.in/buying-my-first-ever-laptop

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Next: Chapter 6 — Starting Again in a Tiny Rented Room

CHAPTER 6

Starting Again in a Tiny Rented Room

There's a specific kind of silence that exists in small spaces.

It's not peaceful. It's not calming.

It's the silence of two people trying to coexist in a room barely big enough for one, both pretending that this is okay, that this is manageable, that this isn't slowly crushing them.

That's what those first weeks felt like.

The room we'd moved into wasn't just small—it was oppressive.

I've already described the size, but let me paint the picture more clearly so you can really see it.

Imagine a space about ten feet by twelve feet. Maybe smaller.

One mattress on the floor—thin, worn, the kind that offers no real cushioning between you and the hard concrete beneath.

One light bulb hanging from the ceiling, flickering occasionally when the power was weak.

A tiny bathroom in the corner with a door that didn't close properly.

No kitchen. No stove. We had a small electric hot plate that we'd use to heat water or cook rice when we could afford it.

Two bags in the corner containing everything we owned.

That was it.

That was home.

The building itself wasn't much better.

It was old, crumbling in places, the kind of structure that looked like it had been patched and repaired a hundred times but never properly maintained.

The hallways smelled like stale cooking oil and mildew.

You could hear everything through the walls. Conversations from neighboring rooms. Arguments. Crying babies. Someone's TV blaring late into the night.

Privacy didn't exist.

Neither did quiet.

But we made it work.

Or at least, we tried to.

My mother found small work here and there—nothing consistent, nothing that paid well, but enough to contribute something.

I focused on trading and trying to learn new skills that could bring in money.

Every rupee mattered now.

We weren't just saving for things we wanted anymore.

We were budgeting for survival.

Rent. Food. Electricity. Water.

Those weren't luxuries. They were the baseline. And some weeks, even the baseline felt impossible.

I remember one week in particular—maybe the second or third week after we'd moved in—when we ran out of money completely.

Not "we're low on funds" out of money.

I mean we had nothing.

Zero.

My mother checked her purse three times, as if the money might magically appear.

It didn't.

We had enough rice for maybe two more days if we stretched it.

No vegetables. No dal. No oil.

Just rice and water.

I tried to trade that week, hoping to make something, but the market wasn't cooperating. I lost two trades in a row and had to stop before I drained the little I had left in my account.

I felt helpless.

Completely, utterly helpless.

That's when I realized something important.

Trading was useful. It had helped us before. It had bought my mother a phone and given me a sense of capability.

But it wasn't reliable.

It wasn't steady.

Some days you win. Some days you lose. And when your survival depends on winning, losing becomes unbearable.

I needed something more stable.

Something I could build over time.

Something that didn't depend on market movements I couldn't control.

So I started researching other ways to make money online.

I came across copywriting first.

For those who don't know, copywriting is the skill of writing words that sell. Sales pages. Emails. Ads. Anything designed to persuade someone to take action.

It seemed perfect.

You didn't need expensive equipment. You didn't need inventory. You just needed to understand human psychology and be able to write clearly.

I started watching videos. Reading articles. Studying examples of good copy.

I learned about headlines, hooks, calls to action, emotional triggers.

I practiced writing sales emails for imaginary products, trying to mimic the structure I'd seen in successful campaigns.

It was hard.

Way harder than trading.

Because with trading, you get immediate feedback. You place a trade and within minutes, you know if you were right or wrong.

With copywriting, there's no immediate feedback.

You write something and you have no idea if it's good until you try to sell it to someone.

And I didn't have anyone to sell it to yet.

So I started doing outreach.

Cold emails. Cold messages on LinkedIn. Anything I could think of.

I'd find small businesses online—local companies, startups, anyone who might need help with their marketing—and I'd send them a message.

Something like:

"Hi, I noticed your website could use better copy on the homepage. I specialize in writing sales copy that converts visitors into customers. Would you be open to a quick conversation about how I could help?"

I sent dozens of these messages.

Maybe a hundred.

I got almost no responses.

A few people replied with polite rejections.

Most just ignored me completely.

It was demoralizing.

But I kept going.

Because what else was I supposed to do?

Around the same time, I also tried freelancing platforms.

Upwork. Fiverr. Freelancer.

I created profiles, uploaded samples of my work, and started applying to jobs.

But I ran into problems immediately.

Upwork required verification. They wanted ID, proof of address, bank details.

I filled everything out as best as I could.

And then I got rejected.

"Your profile could not be verified at this time."

No explanation. No option to appeal. Just... rejected.

I tried Fiverr next.

Same thing.

I set up a profile, created a few gigs, submitted everything.

And then I got flagged for some kind of policy violation I didn't even understand.

They asked me to verify my identity.

I sent the documents.

They rejected them.

Again, no explanation.

Just: "We cannot verify your account."

It felt like every door I tried to open slammed shut in my face.

I couldn't get verified on the platforms that could actually connect me with clients.

I couldn't afford to buy a domain name to build my own website.

I couldn't afford a US phone number, which some services required.

I was stuck.

Locked out of the systems that were supposed to help people like me.

But even as I dealt with those failures, life in that tiny room continued.

The electricity cuts became routine.

Sometimes the power would go out for an hour. Sometimes three. Once, it was out for an entire day.

When that happened, I couldn't work. Couldn't trade. Couldn't learn. Couldn't do anything except sit in the heat and wait.

The water supply was just as unreliable.

Some days we'd have running water for a few hours in the morning.

Other days, nothing.

When there was no water, we'd have to fill buckets from a public tap down the street and carry them back.

My mother usually did this, but sometimes I'd go with her.

I remember the weight of those buckets. The way the plastic handle dug into my palms. The embarrassment of standing in line with a dozen other people, all of us waiting for our turn to fill containers with water for basic needs.

It was humbling.

And exhausting.

Sleeping on that mattress destroyed my back.

I'd wake up every morning with a dull ache across my lower back and shoulders.

At first, I thought I'd get used to it.

I didn't.

It just became a constant presence. A reminder, every single morning, of where I was and what I didn't have.

Some nights I'd lie awake, unable to sleep because of the discomfort, and I'd think about the life I'd had just a few months earlier.

A bed. A room with a door. Space to move.

It hadn't been perfect, but it had been so much better than this.

And now it was gone.

But here's what I learned during those weeks.

You can get used to almost anything.

Not in the sense that it stops being hard.

But in the sense that you stop seeing it as exceptional.

At first, living in that room felt unbearable. Every day felt like a crisis.

But after a few weeks, it just became... normal.

This was life now.

Electricity cuts? Normal.

No water? Normal.

Back pain? Normal.

Skipping meals to save money? Normal.

I stopped waiting for things to get better and just started living within the reality I had.

And once I accepted that, I could start focusing on what I *could* control.

I kept working.

Every single day, no matter how hard it was, I opened my laptop and did *something*.

Some days I'd trade.

Some days I'd write copy, even if I had no one to send it to.

Some days I'd study marketing, SEO, business models—anything I thought might be useful later.

I didn't have a plan yet.

I didn't have a clear path.

But I knew that if I stopped working, if I gave in to the despair and the exhaustion, I'd never get out.

So I kept going.

One thing that helped was creating structure.

When your environment is chaotic, structure becomes a lifeline.

So I made a routine for myself.

Wake up. Drink water. Stretch to ease the back pain.

Open the laptop. Check the markets. Decide if today was a trading day or a learning day.

If I traded, I'd follow my rules. No emotional decisions. No chasing losses.

If I didn't trade, I'd spend the day learning or reaching out to potential clients.

Lunch—whatever we had.

More work in the afternoon.

Evening: analyze what I'd done that day. What worked. What didn't.

Night: read or watch videos until I couldn't keep my eyes open anymore.

Sleep. Repeat.

It wasn't exciting.

It wasn't glamorous.

But it kept me sane.

My mother and I didn't talk much during this time.

Not because we were angry at each other.

But because there wasn't much to say.

We were both just trying to survive.

She'd go out and try to find work.

I'd stay in the room and try to make money online.

In the evenings, we'd sit together, eat whatever we'd managed to put together, and then go to sleep.

Sometimes she'd ask me how the day went.

I'd usually say, "Fine," even if it wasn't.

Because what was the point of worrying her more than she already was?

But despite the hardship, despite the failures, despite the constant feeling that I was one bad week away from total collapse, I started to notice something.

I was getting stronger.

Not physically—if anything, I was getting thinner from skipping meals.

But mentally.

Emotionally.

Every day that I survived was proof that I could survive the next one.

Every rejection I faced made the next one sting a little less.

Every failure taught me something I could use later.

I was building resilience without even realizing it.

I was learning how to function in chaos.

And that skill—that ability to keep working even when everything around you is falling apart—would end up being the most valuable thing I ever learned.

But just when I thought we'd found some kind of rhythm, just when I thought maybe we could survive in that room indefinitely, something happened that shattered whatever fragile stability we'd built.

My father found us.

And when he did, everything got worse before it got better.

LESSONS I LEARNED

Adaptability is survival. I learned to live without electricity, without consistent water, without space, without comfort. None of those things killed me. They were hard, brutally hard, but I adapted. The ability to adapt to circumstances you can't control is one of the most underrated skills in life. It's not about being happy with less. It's about refusing to let difficult circumstances stop you from functioning.

Routine creates stability when everything else is chaos. When your environment is unstable, when you don't know if you'll have power or water or food, having a routine becomes an anchor. It gives you something to control. Waking up and following the same pattern every day—even when that pattern is hard—kept me from spiraling.

Structure isn't restrictive. It's liberating. It frees your mind to focus on what matters instead of constantly reacting to chaos.

Every door that closes teaches you something. Upwork rejected me. Fiverr rejected me. Dozens of cold emails went unanswered. At the time, it felt like the universe was conspiring against me. But every rejection taught me something about how systems work, what people look for, and where the gaps were. Failure isn't wasted time if you extract the lesson. And sometimes the lesson is simply: this path isn't for me, so I'll find another one.

You can't control outcomes, but you can control effort. I couldn't control whether the electricity would stay on. I couldn't control whether someone would respond to my outreach. I couldn't control whether a trade would win or lose. But I could control whether I showed up. Whether I did the work. Whether I tried. Focusing on controllable inputs instead of uncontrollable outcomes is the only way to stay sane when life is unpredictable.

Poverty doesn't pause ambition—it sharpens it. Living in that room didn't make me stop wanting more. If anything, it made me want it more desperately. I've noticed that some people assume hardship crushes dreams. Sometimes it does. But sometimes it does the opposite. Sometimes it makes you so hungry for change that you'll do things comfortable people never would. Desperation can be destructive, but it can also be fuel. The key is channeling it into action instead of letting it consume you.

We thought we'd escaped.

We thought that by leaving, by finding that room, by surviving those first brutal weeks, we'd made it through the worst.

We hadn't.

Because a few weeks later, my father showed up.

And suddenly we were faced with a decision that would test everything I thought I knew about survival.

Next: Chapter 7 — The Day We Escaped Again

The Day We Escaped Again

There are moments in your life when time moves differently.

When seconds stretch into minutes and your heartbeat becomes the loudest sound in the world.

When you realize that what you do in the next few minutes could determine everything that comes after.

This chapter is about one of those moments.

The day we escaped again.

We'd been living in that tiny rented room for a few weeks when my father found us.

I still don't know how he tracked us down. Maybe someone told him. Maybe he searched until he figured it out.

It doesn't matter.

What matters is that one afternoon, he showed up.

I wasn't there when he first arrived.

I'd gone out to buy a few things—basic groceries, whatever we could afford with the little money we had.

When I came back, I found him sitting in our room with my mother.

The moment I walked through the door and saw him, my stomach dropped.

Not because I was angry.

Because I was scared.

Scared of what this meant. Scared of what would happen next.

He looked at me.

I looked at him.

Neither of us said anything at first.

He didn't come to fight.

At least, not that day.

He came to talk.

To convince us to come back.

He said things had changed. That things would be different this time. That we should give it another chance.

My mother listened quietly.

I didn't say much.

I just stood there, trying to read the situation, trying to figure out what was really happening.

Here's the thing about situations like this:

When you've left once, going back feels impossible.

You've already made the hardest decision. You've already walked away.

Going back feels like admitting you were wrong. Like erasing all the pain you went through to leave in the first place.

But when someone you love is asking you to come back, when they're promising that things will be different, when you're exhausted and broke and barely surviving, part of you wants to believe them.

Part of you wants to hope that maybe—just maybe—they're telling the truth.

My mother agreed to go back.

Not immediately. But after some conversation, after some time, she agreed.

I didn't argue with her.

I was fifteen. I didn't have all the answers. I didn't know what the right choice was.

And part of me—a small, desperate part—wanted to believe him too.

So a few days later, we packed our things again.

The same two bags we'd arrived with.

And we left that tiny room and went back.

The journey back felt surreal.

We took another auto-rickshaw, this time in the opposite direction, retracing the path we'd taken just weeks earlier.

I sat in the back, bags on my lap, staring out at the streets, wondering if we were making a terrible mistake.

My mother sat next to me, silent.

I couldn't tell what she was thinking.

But I could feel the tension radiating off her.

She wasn't relaxed. She wasn't relieved.

She was bracing herself.

We arrived at the house—the one we'd left in the middle of the night all those weeks ago.

Walking back through that door felt wrong.

Everything looked the same. The furniture. The walls. The rooms.

But it didn't feel the same.

It felt like walking back into a cage we'd barely escaped from.

For the first few hours, things seemed okay.

My father was calm. Almost pleasant.

He talked about plans. About how things were going to be better now.

My mother nodded along, but I could see the guardedness in her eyes.

She wasn't convinced.

Neither was I.

Then my father said he needed to go pick up a family member.

Someone who lived nearby, I think. I don't remember the exact reason.

What I do remember is this:

He left.

And the moment he was gone, my mother looked at me.

And I looked at her.

And without saying a word, we both knew.

This was our chance.

"We're leaving," she said quietly. "Right now."

My heart started pounding immediately.

"Are you sure?"

She nodded. "We don't have much time. Start packing. Everything. As fast as you can."

I didn't ask questions.

I just moved.

We grabbed the same two bags we'd brought back with us and started shoving everything inside.

Clothes. Documents. Chargers. My laptop.

We weren't careful. We weren't methodical.

We were panicking.

Because we had no idea how much time we had.

Ten minutes? Thirty? An hour?

What if he came back while we were still packing?

What if he caught us halfway out the door?

I kept glancing at the window, expecting to see him walking up the street any second.

My hands were shaking so badly I could barely zip the bags closed.

My mother was moving faster than I'd ever seen her move, her face set in grim determination.

She wasn't scared.

Or if she was, she wasn't letting it show.

She was just focused.

Focused on getting us out.

We finished packing in maybe fifteen minutes.

Both bags stuffed full. Heavy. Awkward to carry.

We didn't take everything. We couldn't.

We just took what we could fit and what we absolutely needed.

"Ready?" my mother asked.

I nodded, even though I wasn't ready at all.

We walked out the door.

The street outside was quiet.

A few people walking by, going about their day, completely unaware that we were in the middle of escaping.

We started walking quickly toward the main road, where we could hopefully find transportation.

Every few seconds, I'd glance over my shoulder, terrified that I'd see him coming.

But the street stayed empty.

We reached the main road and my mother flagged down an auto-rickshaw.

The driver pulled over.

We started loading the bags into the back.

And that's when the problem started.

"This is too much luggage," the driver said, shaking his head. "I can't take this much."

My heart sank.

"Please," my mother said. "We really need to go. Right now."

He looked at the bags, then at us, clearly uncomfortable.

"It's too heavy. It'll slow me down."

"We'll pay extra," my mother said quickly. "Whatever you want. Just please take us."

I could hear the desperation in her voice.

I could feel it in my own chest, a tight knot of panic that was growing with every second we stood there.

Every second we weren't moving was another second he could come back.

Another second we could get caught.

The driver hesitated.

Looked at the bags again.

Looked at us.

And finally, reluctantly, he nodded.

"Okay. But you pay extra."

"Yes. Anything. Thank you."

We shoved the bags in as quickly as we could and climbed into the back.

The driver started the engine.

And slowly—too slowly, it felt like—we started moving.

I didn't breathe properly until we turned the corner and the house disappeared from view.

Even then, I kept looking back.

Waiting for something to go wrong.

Waiting for him to somehow appear and stop us.

But he didn't.

We kept moving.

Away from that house.

Away from that life.

For the second time.

It wasn't until we reached the highway—until we were far enough away that going back wasn't an option anymore—that I finally started to relax.

Not completely.

But enough to realize that we'd actually done it.

We'd escaped.

Again.

But we didn't go back to the tiny rented room.

Not right away.

Instead, my mother directed the driver to a different part of town.

To the home of some family friends—people we trusted, people who'd known us for years.

She'd already contacted them somehow, I think. Maybe while we were packing. Maybe before we even left the first time.

I don't know.

All I know is that when we arrived, they opened the door without hesitation and let us in.

These weren't wealthy people.

They didn't have much more than we did.

But they had space. And they had kindness.

And for the next few days, that was enough.

They didn't ask too many questions.

They didn't make us explain everything.

They just gave us a place to stay while we figured out what to do next.

I remember sitting in their living room that first night, bags still packed by the door, feeling a strange mix of relief and exhaustion.

We'd made it.

We were safe.

For now.

But the fear didn't disappear immediately.

For days afterward, I'd tense up every time I heard footsteps outside.

Every time a vehicle slowed down near the house.

Every unexpected sound made my heart race.

I couldn't shake the feeling that somehow, he'd find us again.

That we'd have to run again.

That this would never end.

But slowly, over the course of a week, that fear started to fade.

We stayed with those friends for maybe ten days.

Long enough to catch our breath. Long enough to figure out the next step.

And then, when we felt ready, we went back to the tiny rented room.

The one we'd left to go back to the house.

The one that, despite its size and its problems, had become the safest place we knew.

Looking back now, that day—the day we escaped the second time—feels like the most important day of my life.

Not because it was dramatic.

But because it taught me something I'll never forget.

Sometimes survival is a series of small decisions made in moments of terror.

Deciding to pack.

Deciding to move fast.

Deciding to get in that rickshaw even when the driver hesitated.

Deciding to keep going even when everything in you wants to freeze.

None of those decisions felt heroic in the moment.

They felt desperate. Frantic. Barely controlled.

But together, they saved us.

And I learned something else that day too.

You don't need a perfect plan. You just need to move.

We didn't know exactly where we were going when we left that house.

We didn't have everything figured out.

We just knew we had to go. Right then. No more waiting.

And that decision—to act in the face of uncertainty, to move even when the path wasn't clear—made all the difference.

In the weeks that followed, I thought a lot about that day.

About how close we came to not making it out.

About how different our lives would be if that driver had refused to take us.

About how much can change in fifteen minutes of pure, adrenaline-fueled action.

And I realized something that would shape everything I did afterward:

When the moment comes, you don't get to choose whether you're ready.

You only get to choose whether you act.

We were safe now.

Back in the tiny room with the peeling paint and the thin mattress and the unreliable electricity.

But it felt different this time.

Because we'd chosen it.

We hadn't been forced there by circumstance.

We'd fought to get back there.

And that made it ours in a way it hadn't been before.

But even as we settled back in, even as we tried to rebuild some sense of normalcy, I knew the hardest part was still ahead.

Because in just a few weeks, something would happen that would change everything again.

Something I had no way to prepare for.

Something that would test me in ways I never imagined.

My father was going to die.

And when he did, I'd have to figure out how to grieve someone I'd spent so much of my life trying to escape from.

LESSONS I LEARNED

Courage isn't the absence of fear—it's action in spite of it. My hands were shaking the entire time we packed. My heart was pounding so hard I thought I might throw up. I was terrified. But I packed anyway. I moved anyway. I got in that rickshaw anyway. I've learned that brave people aren't people who don't feel fear. They're people who feel it fully and still do what needs to be done.

Windows of opportunity close fast. We had maybe fifteen minutes. Maybe less. If we'd hesitated, if we'd second-guessed, if we'd waited to make sure we had

everything perfect, we wouldn't have made it out. Opportunities in life don't wait for you to be comfortable. They appear for a brief moment and then they're gone. Learning to recognize those moments and act immediately is a skill that translates to everything—business, relationships, life.

Sometimes the right decision looks like chaos. We weren't calm. We weren't organized. We shoved things into bags without thinking. We moved in a panic. And yet, it was exactly the right thing to do. I've learned that not all good decisions look elegant. Sometimes the right move looks messy and desperate and barely controlled. What matters isn't how it looks. What matters is that you do it.

Small acts of kindness can save lives. Those family friends who took us in didn't have to. They had their own problems, their own struggles. But they opened their door anyway. They gave us space and safety and time to breathe. I'll never forget that. And I've learned that when you have the chance to help someone who's desperate, you do it. No questions. No judgment. Just help. Because someday you might be the one who needs it.

Going back isn't always failure—sometimes it's information. We went back to that house and it confirmed what we already suspected: nothing had changed. Some people might see that as a waste of time, as a mistake. But it wasn't. It gave us the information we needed to make the final break with absolute certainty. Sometimes you need to test something one more time before you can let it go forever. And that's okay.

We were safe.

For now.

But safety is temporary when you're living on the edge.

And in just a few weeks, I'd learn that lesson in the hardest way possible.

Next: Chapter 8 — The Hardest Winter

CHAPTER 8

The Hardest Winter

December 2025.

I've always thought it was strange how the coldest months can feel the heaviest, even when the weather itself isn't that cold.

India doesn't have harsh winters like some countries do. December in Uttar Pradesh is cool, not freezing. The kind of weather where you need a light jacket in the morning and by afternoon you're fine.

But that December—that particular December—felt colder than any weather I'd ever experienced.

Not because of the temperature.

Because of everything else.

We'd been back in the tiny rented room for a few weeks by then.

The room that had felt like a cage when we first moved in now felt like the only stable thing in our lives.

It was still small. Still uncomfortable. Still subject to random electricity cuts and water shortages.

But it was ours.

And more importantly, it was safe.

No one was coming to find us there anymore.

No one was trying to convince us to come back.

We'd made our choice, and we were living with it.

The days had settled into a rhythm.

My mother would go out in the mornings, looking for work—any work. Cleaning houses. Helping at local shops. Whatever she could find that would bring in a few hundred rupees.

I'd stay in the room, working on my laptop.

Trading when the markets were good and I felt confident.

Trying to learn copywriting. Doing outreach. Watching tutorials. Reading articles.

Trying, failing, trying again.

We'd meet back in the evening, pool whatever money we had, figure out what we could afford to eat that night.

Some nights it was rice and dal.

Some nights just rice.

Once or twice, nothing but tea and whatever bread we could afford.

It wasn't sustainable. We both knew that.

But we were surviving.

And for a while, that felt like enough.

But December brought something I hadn't anticipated.

Exhaustion.

Not physical exhaustion—though there was plenty of that.

Mental exhaustion.

Emotional exhaustion.

The kind that settles into your bones and makes everything feel harder than it should be.

I'd wake up in the morning and the first thought in my head wouldn't be optimism or motivation.

It would be: *I have to do this again today.*

Another day of staring at charts.

Another day of sending cold emails that wouldn't get answered.

Another day of trying to figure out how to make money from nothing with skills I was still learning.

Another day of watching my mother come home tired, her face lined with worry she tried to hide.

I started to notice small things that I hadn't paid attention to before.

The way my back didn't just hurt in the mornings anymore—it hurt all day.

The way I'd lost weight without realizing it. My clothes hung looser. My face looked thinner.

The way my mother's hands had started to look older. Rougher. The hands of someone who'd been working too hard for too long.

The way we'd both stopped talking about the future.

We used to talk about what we'd do when things got better.

When we had more money. When we found stability.

But by December, those conversations had stopped.

We just focused on getting through the day.

The electricity cuts got worse.

I don't know if it was the season or just bad luck, but it felt like the power went out every other day.

Sometimes for an hour. Sometimes for three or four.

When it happened during the day, I couldn't work. Couldn't trade. Couldn't even charge my phone or laptop.

I'd just sit there in the dim light coming through the small window, feeling time slip away, feeling like I was falling further behind with every hour I couldn't work.

When it happened at night, we'd sit in darkness.

No lights. No fan. Just the two of us in that tiny room, waiting for the power to come back on.

Sometimes my mother would talk to fill the silence.

She'd tell me stories from when she was younger. Memories from before everything got complicated.

I'd listen, half paying attention, half lost in my own thoughts.

Wondering how much longer we could do this.

Wondering if there was an end in sight.

Wondering if I was strong enough to keep going.

I think that was the first time I seriously considered giving up.

Not giving up on life—I wasn't suicidal or anything like that.

But giving up on the idea that I could build something.

Giving up on the belief that I could turn my self-taught skills into a real income.

Giving up on the hope that things would ever be different than they were right now.

It would've been so easy to just stop.

To admit that I was just a kid who didn't know what he was doing.

To accept that maybe the traditional path—school, college, a job—was the only real option.

To let go of this exhausting, impossible dream of building something on my own.

But every time that thought crept in, something stopped me.

Maybe it was stubbornness.

Maybe it was pride.

Maybe it was the look on my mother's face when I'd given her that phone months earlier—the look that said she believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself.

Or maybe it was something simpler.

Maybe it was just the realization that I'd already come too far to quit now.

I'd already left home. Twice.

I'd already dropped out of school.

I'd already committed to this path.

And turning back now wouldn't make things easier.

It would just mean all the pain I'd already gone through was for nothing.

So I kept going.

Even when I didn't want to.

Even when every fiber of my being wanted to just close the laptop and sleep for three days straight.

I kept opening it.

Kept working.

Kept learning.

Kept trying.

One night in mid-December, I was sitting on the floor, laptop balanced on my knees, trying to write a sales email for a copywriting outreach campaign.

I'd been staring at the same blank page for thirty minutes.

Nothing was coming.

My brain felt foggy. Empty.

I closed the laptop and leaned back against the wall, closing my eyes.

My mother was lying on the mattress a few feet away, already asleep—or pretending to be.

The room was quiet except for the distant sounds of the neighborhood. Dogs barking. Someone's TV. Traffic in the distance.

And for a moment, I let myself feel everything I'd been pushing down.

The fear.

The uncertainty.

The exhaustion.

The crushing weight of responsibility that I'd never asked for but had somehow become mine anyway.

I was fifteen years old.

I should've been worrying about exams and cricket matches and what I was going to do on the weekend.

Instead, I was worrying about rent and food and whether I'd ever figure out how to make this work.

I let myself feel it all for maybe five minutes.

And then I pushed it back down.

Because feeling it didn't change anything.

It didn't pay rent.

It didn't put food on the table.

It didn't move me any closer to the life I was trying to build.

So I opened the laptop again.

And I started writing.

The email I wrote that night wasn't great.

But it was something.

And something was better than nothing.

I sent it to a list of small businesses I'd compiled over the past few days.

Then I closed the laptop, lay down on the mattress next to my mother, and tried to sleep.

My back ached.

My mind raced.

But eventually, exhaustion won, and I drifted off.

December continued like that.

Day after day of the same struggle.

The same failures.

The same tiny victories that never felt quite big enough.

The electricity would cut out. We'd wait for it to come back.

The water would stop running. We'd carry buckets from the public tap.

I'd lose a trade and feel like an idiot.

I'd send twenty cold emails and get zero responses.

My mother would come home exhausted, and I'd feel guilty that I couldn't contribute more.

It was a grind.

A relentless, soul-crushing grind.

And the only thing that kept me going was the belief—thin and fragile as it was—that eventually, if I just kept pushing, something would break in my favor.

But I had no idea that the hardest moment of that winter—of my entire life, really—was still ahead.

I had no idea that in just a few weeks, I'd lose someone I had a complicated, painful relationship with.

I had no idea that grief could feel so confusing when it's mixed with relief and regret and anger and sadness all at once.

I had no idea that December 2025 would become a month I'd remember forever.

Not because of the cold.

Not because of the poverty.

But because of what was coming.

LESSONS I LEARNED

Exhaustion is not the same as failure. I was tired. Deeply, bone-achingly tired. But tired doesn't mean you're doing it wrong. Sometimes exhaustion is just proof that you're carrying a heavy load. And as long as you keep carrying it, you haven't failed. I've learned to distinguish between the exhaustion that says "rest" and the exhaustion that says "quit." One is temporary. The other is permanent. Know the difference.

Progress doesn't always feel like progress. Every day in December felt the same. Wake up. Work. Fail. Sleep. Repeat. It didn't feel like I was moving forward. But I was. I was learning. Building skills. Developing resilience. Creating mental toughness. None of that shows up on a scoreboard. But it's real. And it compounds. Just because you can't see progress doesn't mean it's not happening.

Sometimes survival is the victory. I didn't sign a huge client in December. I didn't make breakthrough money. I didn't have any wins that looked impressive from the outside. But I survived. We kept the room. We didn't starve. I didn't quit. And in seasons like that, survival is enough. Celebrate the fact that you're still here. Still trying. Still in the fight. That's not a small thing.

You can't outrun exhaustion—you have to work with it. I kept trying to push through the tiredness, to ignore it, to pretend I wasn't running on empty. That didn't work. What worked was acknowledging it and adjusting. Trading less on days I felt foggy. Writing simpler emails when my brain couldn't handle complex ones. Resting when rest was possible. You can't always eliminate exhaustion, but you can learn to function within it.

Comparison is poison when you're in survival mode. I'd sometimes see people online talking about their wins. Their clients. Their revenue. Their growth. And I'd feel like a failure. But they weren't living in a ten-by-twelve room with intermittent electricity. They weren't fifteen and supporting their mother. They weren't starting from where I was starting. Comparing yourself to people in completely different circumstances is self-destruction. The only person you need to beat is the version of yourself from yesterday.

December dragged on.

Cold nights. Long days. Endless uncertainty.

But I kept going.

And then, just when I thought the worst of it was behind me, something happened that changed everything.

My father died.

And suddenly, all the exhaustion, all the struggle, all the grinding daily effort felt like background noise compared to the storm of emotions that followed.

Next: Chapter 9 — Losing My Father

CHAPTER 9

Losing My Father

December 2025.

The month that started heavy and ended by breaking something inside me.

I was sitting on the floor, laptop balanced on my knees, trying to figure out why my latest batch of outreach emails was getting ignored. The electricity had been out for two hours. The room was cold. My fingers were stiff. My mother was in the corner, quietly folding clothes we'd washed by hand the day before.

Then my phone rang.

I don't remember the number. I just remember answering it, and the voice on the other end saying words I wasn't prepared to hear.

"He's gone."

I didn't understand at first. My brain just stopped processing. The voice belonged to a relative. They repeated it. Slower this time. Clearer.

And then I understood.

I need to be very careful with how I tell this part.

I wasn't there when it happened. I don't know the exact details of his final hours. According to what I was told later, it was sudden. A medical emergency. There wasn't time to call us. There wasn't time for goodbyes. There wasn't time for any of the things people imagine having when they lose someone.

I'm sharing this only because it's what I was told, not because I witnessed it or can verify it myself. I've learned to be careful with stories I didn't live through firsthand. I won't pretend to know things I don't. I'll only tell you what I experienced, and what I was told afterward.

I hung up the phone and just sat there.

My mother looked at me from across the room. I said his name. That was all it took. She understood immediately.

She didn't scream. She didn't collapse. She just closed her eyes and sat down heavily on the thin mattress.

We both knew what it meant. We both knew what we had to do next.

But in that quiet moment, before the logistics took over, I felt something I didn't expect.

It wasn't just sadness.

It was confusion. It was relief. It was guilt for feeling relief. It was anger that it ended this way, without resolution, without closure, without the conversations I'd always told myself we'd have someday.

Grief, I learned that day, is rarely a single emotion. It's a storm of contradictory feelings crashing into each other all at once. You can mourn someone and still feel the weight lift off your shoulders. You can miss them and still be glad they're no longer causing pain. You can love the idea of a father while grieving the reality of the man he was.

None of it makes sense. And that's exactly what makes it so heavy.

The next few days blurred together.

Traveling back. Arrangements. Rituals. Family members gathering. Quiet conversations. Long silences.

I won't go into the details of the ceremonies. They're personal, and they belong to our family and our traditions. But I will tell you about one thing that has stayed with me ever since.

A Father's Day gift I never got to give him.

Months earlier, I'd saved a little money from trading and bought a simple watch. It wasn't expensive. It wasn't flashy. Just something decent. Something he could wear.

I'd kept it in my bag, tucked away, waiting for the right moment. Waiting for things to be easier between us. Waiting for a day that felt appropriate. Waiting for the tension to fade so I could hand it to him without it feeling awkward or forced.

That day never came.

I still have that watch. It sits in a drawer somewhere. I don't wear it. I probably never will. But it's a permanent reminder of something I've carried ever since: time doesn't wait for you to be ready. It doesn't pause for perfect conditions. It just moves forward, and if you keep waiting, the moment disappears.

His death also made me think of my grandmother. Of all the times I could have visited her, called her, sat with her, listened to her stories. I kept telling myself I'd do it later. When I had more time. When things were less chaotic. When I had something to show for my efforts.

She's gone too now.

And I've learned that "later" is a dangerous word. It sounds like a promise, but it's usually just an excuse.

Here's the part people don't talk about.

When you're living on the edge, when every rupee counts and every day is about survival, grief doesn't get the space it deserves.

You don't get weeks to mourn. You don't get to step away from reality. You don't get the luxury of falling apart.

The day after the funeral, I was back in that tiny room. The electricity was out again. My laptop battery was at twenty percent. I had outreach emails to send. I had trades to analyze. I had to figure out how we'd pay rent next month.

Grief is a luxury you can't afford when you're trying to keep your head above water.

So I compartmentalized. I put the sadness in a box, locked it, and got to work.

Not because I didn't care. Not because I was cold. But because caring didn't change the fact that we still needed to eat. Because crying doesn't pay rent. Because the world doesn't stop spinning just because your heart breaks.

I've heard people call that "toxic" or "unhealthy." Maybe it is. But when you're fifteen, responsible for your mother's survival, with no safety net and no backup plan, compartmentalization isn't a character flaw. It's a survival mechanism.

Looking back now, I realize I never really processed his death at the time. I just survived it.

And maybe that's okay. Maybe survival is the first stage of grief. Maybe the processing happens later, in quiet moments, years down the line, when you finally have the space to feel it without it collapsing your entire life.

I don't hate him. I don't romanticize him either. He was a flawed man. He made choices that caused us pain. He also made choices that shaped me. I carry both truths now. And I've learned that you can mourn someone without forgiving everything. You can miss the idea of what could have been while accepting what actually was.

But death doesn't pause your journey. It just changes the weight you're carrying.

And in January 2026, I had to make a choice. I could let the grief paralyze me, or I could channel it into the only thing I knew how to do.

Keep going.

Keep trying.

Keep building.

I chose the latter.

And that decision led me into a phase of relentless, exhausting, necessary experimentation. A phase where I tried everything, failed at almost everything, and slowly learned what actually works when you're starting from absolute zero.

LESSONS I LEARNED

Grief doesn't follow a schedule, especially when survival is the priority. People expect mourning to look a certain way. They expect tears, reflection, quiet acceptance. But when you're fighting to keep your head above water, grief becomes background noise. You don't get to fall apart. You just keep moving. And that's not weakness. It's adaptation. You'll process the loss later, when the pressure lifts. Until then, survival is enough.

Time doesn't wait for perfect moments. The Father's Day watch I never gave him taught me that waiting for the "right time" is often just fear in disguise. If you want to tell someone you appreciate them, do it now. If you want to visit someone, go now. If

you want to say sorry or thank you or I love you, don't wait for circumstances to align. They rarely do.

You can hold two opposing truths at once. He was difficult. He was also my father. I was hurt by his choices. I also carry pieces of him in how I work, how I push forward, how I refuse to quit. Life isn't black and white. People aren't either. You can acknowledge the pain someone caused you while still honoring the humanity they had. Both can be true.

Compartmentalization isn't cowardice—it's sometimes necessary. Putting emotions in a box so you can function isn't suppression. It's triage. When you're in crisis, you deal with what's immediately in front of you. You can't process everything at once. It's okay to delay the emotional work until you're stable enough to handle it. Just don't leave the box locked forever.

Loss clarifies what actually matters. After he died, a lot of noise fell away. Petty grievances stopped mattering. What-ifs stopped mattering. What remained was simple: protect my mother. Build something real. Don't waste time waiting for permission. Grief strips away the unnecessary and leaves you with what's essential. Listen to it.

The winter of 2025 was cold, heavy, and unforgiving.

But it didn't break me.

It just made me quieter. More focused. More determined to figure out how to make this work.

Because I'd already lost too much to keep failing.

And in January 2026, I decided to stop dabbling, stop experimenting, and start doing the one thing I'd been avoiding.

The one thing that actually works when you have no reputation, no portfolio, and no safety net.

I picked up the phone.

And I started calling.

CHAPTER 10

Trying Everything

January 2026.

The start of a new year. A time when most people make resolutions, talk about fresh starts, promise themselves they'll finally do the thing they've been putting off.

I didn't make any resolutions.

I just woke up in that same tiny room, on that same thin mattress, with the same aching back and the same question I'd been asking myself for months:

What actually works?

Not in theory.

Not in YouTube videos or blog posts or success stories.

What actually works when you're a 9th grade dropout with no money, no connections, and no credibility?

I'd been experimenting for months by this point.

Binary trading. Copywriting. Outreach. YouTube Shorts. Freelancing platforms.

I'd tried all of it.

And while some things had worked temporarily—trading had given me enough to buy my mother a phone, enough to survive for a while—nothing had created the kind of steady, reliable income I desperately needed.

Trading was too unpredictable. One good week could be followed by three bad ones.

Copywriting felt promising, but I couldn't get clients. My cold emails disappeared into the void.

Freelancing platforms had rejected me. KYC failures. Account suspensions. Locked out before I even got started.

YouTube Shorts? I'd posted a few. Got a handful of views. Nothing meaningful.

Everything I tried felt like throwing darts at a board in the dark, hoping one of them would hit something that mattered.

Let me walk you through what those months actually looked like.

Not the polished version. The real one.

Binary Trading

I'd already been trading for months at this point, so I knew the basics.

But by late 2025 and early 2026, I started noticing something.

The emotional toll was getting worse.

Every trade felt like life or death because, in a way, it was.

If I won, we'd have money for groceries that week.

If I lost, we'd be eating rice and nothing else.

That kind of pressure makes you a terrible trader.

You start making desperate decisions. Chasing losses. Doubling down when you should walk away.

I'd have a good day and feel like I'd cracked the code.

Then I'd have a bad day and feel like an idiot for ever believing I could do this.

The swings were brutal.

And slowly, I started to realize that no matter how good I got at trading, I couldn't build a business on it.

Because a business needs predictability. Systems. Something that compounds over time.

Trading was just gambling with better analysis.

It could supplement income, but it couldn't be the foundation.

Copywriting

This felt like the most logical path.

I'd read about copywriters making thousands of dollars per client. I'd seen people on Twitter talking about how they'd gone from zero to six figures in a year just by learning to write persuasive emails.

It seemed perfect.

Low barrier to entry. High income potential. Something I could do from my laptop in that tiny room.

So I studied.

I watched hours of tutorials. I read classic books on copywriting—or at least the free PDFs I could find online.

I learned about headlines, hooks, psychological triggers, calls to action.

I practiced writing sales emails, landing pages, ad copy.

I built a small portfolio of fake projects—mock campaigns for imaginary businesses—just so I'd have something to show potential clients.

And then I started reaching out.

Cold emails. Dozens of them.

I'd find small businesses online—local companies, startups, anyone with a website that could use better copy—and I'd send them a message.

Something like:

"Hi [Name], I came across [Company] and noticed your homepage could be clearer about what you offer. I specialize in writing copy that turns visitors into customers. Would you be open to a quick conversation about how I could help?"

I sent maybe fifty of these emails in December and January combined.

I got three responses.

One was a polite "No, thank you."

One was someone asking for my rates, and when I told them, they disappeared.

One was someone who seemed interested, asked for samples, then ghosted me after I sent them.

It was demoralizing.

Not just because I wasn't getting clients.

But because I had no idea what I was doing wrong.

Was my outreach terrible? Was my copywriting not good enough? Was I targeting the wrong businesses?

I didn't know.

And with no one to ask, no mentor to review my work, I was just guessing in the dark.

Freelancing Platforms

Upwork. Fiverr. Freelancer.

These seemed like the easiest path. Platforms designed to connect freelancers with clients. Perfect for someone like me.

Except I couldn't get verified.

Upwork asked for ID, proof of address, bank information. I submitted everything.

"We cannot verify your account at this time."

No explanation. No appeal process. Just rejected.

I tried Fiverr next.

Created a profile. Listed a few gigs—copywriting, basic graphic design, video editing.

Got flagged almost immediately for some policy violation I didn't understand.

They asked me to verify my identity.

I sent documents.

"We cannot verify your account."

Again, no explanation.

I tried Freelancer. Same result.

It felt like every platform was designed to keep people like me out.

People without clean, established identities. People in developing countries. People starting from zero.

The systems were built to protect against fraud, I understand that.

But they also locked out the people who needed those platforms the most.

YouTube Shorts

At some point, I thought maybe I could build an audience.

Post short videos about business, mindset, strategy. Build a following. Monetize eventually.

I recorded a few videos on my phone. Short clips. Thirty to sixty seconds. Talking about lessons I'd learned, mistakes I'd made, things I was figuring out.

I posted them.

Got a few views. Maybe a hundred total across all the videos.

A couple of likes.

No comments. No growth. No traction.

I posted a few more. Same result.

It wasn't that the content was bad—at least, I don't think it was.

It was that I had no idea how to get people to actually see it.

The algorithm didn't care about effort. It cared about engagement. And without an existing audience, I couldn't generate engagement.

Another dead end.

The Platform Bans

This was the most frustrating part.

It wasn't just that things weren't working.

It was that I kept getting locked out of the systems that were supposed to help me.

Instagram flagged my account for suspicious activity. Twitter suspended an account I'd created to network with other entrepreneurs. I still don't know why.

LinkedIn restricted my profile. Apparently, I'd violated some policy about how I was connecting with people.

I couldn't afford a domain name to build my own website.

I couldn't afford a US phone number, which some services required for verification.

I couldn't update my bank information on certain platforms because the verification process required documents I didn't have access to.

Every door I tried to walk through slammed shut in my face.

And through all of this, the daily struggles continued.

The electricity would cut out in the middle of a trade or while I was writing an email.

The water would stop running and we'd have to haul buckets from down the street.

I'd wake up with back pain so bad I could barely sit upright for the first hour.

We'd run out of money and have to stretch a single meal across two days.

My mother would come home exhausted, and I'd feel the weight of not being able to contribute more.

But here's the thing.

I didn't stop.

Even when nothing was working.

Even when every attempt ended in failure.

Even when it felt like the universe was actively conspiring against me.

I kept trying.

Because what was the alternative?

Give up? Go back to school? Pretend that everything I'd been through was for nothing?

No.

I'd already committed. I'd already burned the ships.

The only option was forward.

So I kept experimenting.

Trying different outreach angles.

Testing different platforms.

Watching more tutorials.

Reading more articles.

Refining my approach.

Failing. Adjusting. Trying again.

And slowly—*slowly*—I started to notice patterns.

I started to see what didn't work.

Cold emails that were too long? Ignored.

Messages that sounded desperate? Ignored.

Outreach that talked about me instead of the client? Ignored.

I started learning not just what to do, but what *not* to do.

And that's valuable too.

Because every failure is information if you're paying attention.

By late January, I'd tried almost everything I could think of.

And I'd failed at almost all of it.

But there was one thing I hadn't really committed to yet.

One thing I'd been avoiding because it scared me more than anything else.

Cold calling.

Not emails. Not messages.

Actual phone calls.

Picking up the phone, dialing a number, and talking to a real human being in real time.

No hiding behind written words.

No time to think and revise before hitting send.

Just me, my voice, and the person on the other end deciding in about ten seconds whether I was worth listening to.

It terrified me.

But I was running out of options.

And I'd learned by now that the things that scare you the most are usually the things you need to do.

So I decided to try it.

Not because I wanted to.

Because I had to.

LESSONS I LEARNED

Trying everything isn't a waste of time—it's research. People look at all those failed attempts and think I was spinning my wheels. But I wasn't. I was gathering data. I was learning what didn't work so I could narrow down what might. You can't know what's effective until you eliminate what isn't. Every failed experiment brings you closer to the thing that works. The key is to extract the lesson and move on quickly.

Skills compound even when results don't show immediately. I didn't get copywriting clients right away, but I learned how to write persuasively. I didn't build a YouTube following, but I learned how to communicate ideas clearly on camera. I didn't succeed at trading consistently, but I learned risk management and emotional discipline. All of those skills would become useful later. Just because something doesn't produce immediate income doesn't mean it's wasted effort.

Systems often filter out the people who need them most. Upwork, Fiverr, LinkedIn—they all have verification systems designed to keep out scammers. But those same systems also lock out people in my situation. People without clean documentation. People in developing countries. People starting from absolute zero. I learned that you can't rely on existing systems to give you a chance. Sometimes you have to build your own path around them.

Desperation makes you a bad decision-maker. When every trade, every email, every attempt feels like life or death, you stop thinking clearly. You make emotional decisions. You chase short-term wins at the expense of long-term strategy. I had to

learn to separate the urgent pressure I felt from the actual strategic choices I needed to make. Desperation is fuel, but it's terrible at steering.

The only real failure is stopping. I failed at trading consistently. I failed at getting copywriting clients. I failed at platform verification. I failed at building a YouTube audience. But I didn't stop. And because I didn't stop, those failures became stepping stones instead of endpoints. The moment you stop trying is the moment failure becomes permanent. Until then, you're just learning.

I'd tried everything I could think of from behind a screen.

And most of it hadn't worked.

So in late January 2026, I did the thing I'd been avoiding.

I picked up the phone.

And I started calling businesses.

One by one.

Cold.

Nervous.

Desperate.

But determined.

And that decision—that terrifying, uncomfortable decision—changed everything.

Next: Chapter 11 — Every Door Closed

CHAPTER 11

Every Door Closed

There's a specific kind of frustration that comes from doing everything right and still failing.

Not the frustration of laziness. Not the frustration of giving up too early.

The frustration of genuinely trying, following the advice, putting in the work, and watching door after door slam shut anyway.

That's what late 2025 and early 2026 felt like.

A series of closed doors.

Let me be specific about what I mean.

Because when I say "everything failed," I don't mean I tried once and gave up.

I mean I followed the process. I did what the tutorials said. I took the advice seriously.

And it still didn't work.

Upwork

This was supposed to be the simplest path.

Upwork is one of the biggest freelancing platforms in the world. Millions of freelancers. Thousands of clients posting jobs every day.

All you had to do was create a profile, showcase your skills, and start applying to jobs.

Simple, right?

I spent hours building my profile.

I wrote a clear bio. I listed my skills—copywriting, basic graphic design, video editing, research.

I uploaded samples of work I'd created. Mock projects, since I didn't have real clients yet.

I filled out every section. Made sure everything looked professional.

Then I submitted it for approval.

And waited.

A few days later, I got the response.

"We're unable to verify your account at this time."

That's it.

No explanation of what went wrong.

No details about what I could fix.

No appeal process.

Just... rejected.

I tried creating another account with slightly different information.

Same result.

I tried reaching out to their support team.

Got a generic response that didn't address my specific situation.

And that was it.

Locked out.

Fiverr

Okay, I thought. Upwork didn't work. Let's try Fiverr.

Fiverr is similar but structured differently. Instead of applying to jobs, you create "gigs"—services you offer—and clients come to you.

I created a profile.

I set up three gigs:

- Copywriting for small businesses
- Basic graphic design
- Video editing

I wrote descriptions for each one. Set reasonable prices—low enough to be competitive, high enough to be taken seriously.

I uploaded everything.

And within twenty-four hours, I got flagged.

"Your account has been flagged for review due to a policy violation."

I had no idea what policy I'd violated.

I read through their terms of service. Couldn't find anything I'd done wrong.

They asked me to verify my identity.

I submitted my ID. Proof of address. Everything they asked for.

A few days later:

"We cannot verify your account."

Again, no explanation.

No option to fix whatever the issue was.

Just... locked out.

Freelancer.com

Third platform. Third attempt.

Same process. Create profile. List skills. Submit for approval.

Same result.

Rejected.

At this point, I started to realize something.

The problem wasn't my skills or my profile quality.

The problem was the verification systems themselves.

These platforms are built to protect against fraud. They have to be. There are people trying to scam clients, steal identities, run fake accounts.

So they build strict verification processes.

ID checks. Address verification. Bank account validation.

And those systems work well for people in stable situations.

People with clean documentation. People in developed countries with reliable infrastructure.

But for someone like me?

A fifteen-year-old in India. Living in a tiny rented room. No stable address history. Limited banking documentation.

Those same systems that were supposed to protect the platform were also keeping out the people who needed it most.

Meta / Instagram

I'd been trying to build a presence on Instagram.

Not for personal reasons. For business.

I wanted to connect with other entrepreneurs. Share what I was learning. Build an audience that might eventually turn into clients or opportunities.

I'd post occasionally. Business quotes. Short lessons. Things I was figuring out.

Nothing spammy. Nothing automated.

Just genuine content.

Then one day, I tried to log in and got a message:

"Your account has been temporarily restricted."

Why?

"Suspicious activity detected."

What suspicious activity?

No details.

I think it was because I was logging in from different IP addresses. Sometimes from the room. Sometimes from an internet café when our connection was down or the power was out.

To Instagram's algorithms, that looked like someone might have compromised my account.

So they locked it.

I went through the appeal process. Submitted my ID. Verified my identity.

And... nothing.

The account stayed restricted.

Eventually, I just gave up and created a new one.

Which also got flagged a few weeks later.

Same cycle.

Twitter

I'd created a Twitter account to network with other people building businesses.

I wasn't spamming. I wasn't buying followers. I wasn't doing anything shady.

I was just following people in my niche, engaging with their content, occasionally sharing my own thoughts.

And then, without warning, the account got suspended.

"Your account has been suspended for violating Twitter's rules."

Which rule?

No idea.

I appealed.

Submitted information.

Got a generic response that didn't explain anything.

And the account stayed suspended.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn felt like it should work.

It's a professional network. I was trying to connect with business owners, offer services, build relationships.

But LinkedIn has strict rules about how you connect with people.

If too many people decline your connection requests or mark them as spam, your account gets restricted.

I didn't know this at first.

So I sent connection requests to business owners I thought might need help with marketing or copywriting.

I personalized each message. Kept it professional. Made it about them, not me.

But a lot of people just ignored the requests.

And apparently, enough people hit "I don't know this person" that LinkedIn flagged my account.

"Your account has been restricted for unusual activity."

I couldn't send connection requests anymore.

I couldn't message people I wasn't already connected to.

The entire point of being on the platform—networking—was gone.

Unable to Buy a Domain

At some point, I thought: forget the platforms. I'll build my own website.

That way, I'd have full control. No one could lock me out. I could showcase my work, publish content, build credibility on my own terms.

But to build a website, you need a domain name.

Domains are cheap—usually around $10 to $15 per year.

But when you're living on the edge, when you're budgeting every single rupee for food and rent, even $10 feels like a lot.

I kept telling myself I'd buy one once I had a little extra money.

But there was never extra money.

Every rupee went to survival.

So the website remained an idea. Not a reality.

Unable to Afford a US Phone Number

Some services—especially platforms or tools built for Western markets—required a US phone number for verification.

There are services that provide virtual US numbers. They're not expensive. Maybe $5 to $10 a month.

But again, when you're counting every rupee, that's not trivial.

And without a US number, I couldn't access certain tools that might have helped me.

Another door closed.

Unable to Update Bank Information

Some platforms required you to link a bank account to receive payments.

I had a bank account. A basic one. But updating the information on certain platforms required documents I didn't have easy access to.

Proof of address that matched exactly what was on file. Specific types of ID. Forms that needed to be notarized.

For someone in a stable situation, these are minor inconveniences.

For me, they were insurmountable barriers.

So I'd get to the final step of setting up a profile, hit the payment verification stage, and get stuck.

Another door closed.

Meanwhile, life in that tiny room continued.

The electricity cuts didn't stop just because I was trying to build something.

The water shortages didn't pause for my ambitions.

The back pain didn't ease up because I was working hard.

And the money kept running out faster than I could make it.

There was one week in particular—I think it was mid-January—when I hit a breaking point.

I'd spent the entire week trying to get verified on different platforms, reaching out to potential clients, posting content, doing everything I could think of.

And by Friday, I had nothing to show for it.

Zero clients.

Zero income.

Zero progress.

I closed my laptop, lay down on the mattress, and just stared at the ceiling.

My mother was out, trying to find work.

I was alone in that tiny room, feeling the weight of every failure pressing down on me.

And for the first time in months, I let myself ask the question I'd been avoiding:

What if this doesn't work?

What if I'm just not good enough?

What if all the self-education, all the effort, all the sacrifice is for nothing?

What if I'm supposed to give up and go back to the traditional path—school, college, a job—like everyone said I should?

I sat with that question for maybe an hour.

Let it sink in.

Let myself feel the full weight of the doubt.

And then I pushed it aside.

Because the truth was, I didn't have the luxury of giving up.

Going back to school wasn't an option anymore. We couldn't afford it. I'd already missed too much.

Getting a traditional job at fifteen with no degree? That wasn't happening.

The only path forward was the one I was already on.

And if every door was closed, then I'd have to find a window.

Or break down a wall.

Or build my own damn door.

That's when I made a decision.

I was done relying on platforms that didn't want me.

I was done waiting for verification systems to approve me.

I was done sending emails into the void and hoping someone would respond.

I needed to do something direct.

Something that didn't require anyone's permission.

Something that put me in front of real people, in real time, with a real offer.

I needed to pick up the phone.

And call.

LESSONS I LEARNED

Systems are designed for average cases, not edge cases. Platforms like Upwork, Fiverr, and LinkedIn aren't trying to keep people like me out on purpose. They're just optimized for people with clean documentation, stable addresses, and established identities. But when you're starting from zero in a developing country, you're an edge case. And edge cases get filtered out. I learned that you can't wait for systems to accommodate you. You have to find ways to work around them.

Rejection without explanation is one of the hardest things to overcome. When someone tells you "no" and explains why, you can fix it. You can learn. You can adapt. But when you get rejected with no reason given, no feedback, no path forward, it messes with your head. You start questioning everything. The only way through it is to stop taking it personally and start treating it like data. They rejected me. That's information. Move on.

Barriers to entry protect incumbents more than they protect users. Verification systems. ID requirements. Payment processing rules. They're all designed to make platforms safer. And they do. But they also create barriers that keep new people out. People who are already established can navigate these systems easily. People

starting from nothing get stuck. I learned that every system has gaps, and sometimes your job is to find them or create your own path entirely.

Small expenses become massive when you're broke. Ten dollars for a domain. Five dollars for a virtual phone number. These sound trivial to most people. But when you're living on the edge, when you're choosing between food and opportunity, these small costs become impossible. I learned to be resourceful. To find free alternatives. To build with what I had instead of waiting until I could afford what I wanted.

Sometimes the only way forward is to stop asking for permission. Every platform I tried required approval. Every verification process required someone else to say yes. And they kept saying no. That's when I realized: I can't build something real if my entire business depends on someone else's permission. I needed to create value directly. No intermediaries. No gatekeepers. Just me and the people I could help.

Every door had closed.

Every platform had rejected me.

Every system had filtered me out.

But there was one thing no one could lock me out of.

The phone.

I could find a business. Look up their number. Call them directly.

No verification needed. No approval required. No algorithm deciding whether I was worthy.

Just me, my voice, and my offer.

It was terrifying.

But it was the only door left.

So I walked through it.

Next: Chapter 12 — Cold Calling Businesses

CHAPTER 12

Cold Calling Businesses

I stared at my phone for twenty minutes before making the first call.

It sat on the floor in front of me, screen glowing, contact pulled up, number ready to dial.

All I had to do was press the green button.

But my finger wouldn't move.

This was different from everything else I'd tried.

With emails, you could hide behind words. You could write, revise, delete, rewrite. You had time to think. Time to craft the perfect message.

With cold calling, there was no hiding.

You press dial, and within seconds, a real human being answers. Or doesn't.

And if they do answer, you have maybe ten seconds to say something that doesn't make them hang up immediately.

Ten seconds to prove you're not wasting their time.

Ten seconds to convince them to keep listening.

No time to think. No chance to revise. Just you, your voice, and whether you sound like someone worth hearing.

I'd watched videos on cold calling.

I'd read articles about scripts and techniques and how to handle objections.

I knew the theory.

But knowing and doing are completely different things.

And sitting there, phone in front of me, I realized just how terrified I was.

Not of rejection—I'd been rejected plenty by this point.

I was terrified of sounding stupid.

Of stumbling over my words.

Of a business owner answering and immediately realizing I was just a kid who had no idea what he was doing.

Of confirming, out loud, in real time, that maybe I wasn't cut out for this.

But I also knew I was out of options.

Every platform had rejected me.

Every cold email had gone unanswered.

Every other path had led to a dead end.

This was all I had left.

So I took a breath.

And I pressed dial.

The phone rang.

Once.

Twice.

Three times.

And then someone picked up.

"Hello?"

My throat tightened. For a split second, I almost hung up.

But I didn't.

I forced myself to speak.

"Hi, is this [Business Name]?"

"Yes, who's calling?"

"My name is Aryan. I'm reaching out because I noticed your business online and I think I might be able to help with your marketing. Do you have a minute to talk?"

There was a pause.

A long pause.

And then:

"We're not interested."

Click.

The call lasted maybe fifteen seconds.

I sat there, phone still in my hand, heart pounding.

That was it.

My first cold call.

And I'd been rejected before I even got past the introduction.

But here's the thing.

It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be.

I didn't die. I didn't sound like a complete idiot. The person on the other end was polite, even if they weren't interested.

And most importantly, I'd done it.

I'd made the call.

The first one is always the hardest. And now it was behind me.

So I made another call.

Different business. Different person.

Same script.

Same result.

"Not interested."

Click.

I made a third call.

Then a fourth.

Then a fifth.

By the tenth call, I'd been hung up on six times, sent to voicemail three times, and had one person listen for about thirty seconds before saying they already had someone handling their marketing.

Not a single lead.

Not a single real conversation.

Just rejection after rejection after rejection.

But something interesting started happening.

The fear started to fade.

Not completely. But with each call, the nervousness lessened just a little.

By the twentieth call, I wasn't shaking anymore.

By the thirtieth, I wasn't rehearsing the script in my head before dialing.

I was just calling. Speaking. Handling the rejection. Moving on to the next one.

It became mechanical.

Dial. Introduce. Pitch. Handle objection or rejection. Hang up. Next.

I started keeping track in a notebook.

Date. Business name. Contact person if I got one. Outcome.

Most of the outcomes were the same:

Not interested.

We're good, thanks.

No budget right now.

Already working with someone.

Click.

But I kept calling.

Because what else was I going to do?

After a few days of this, I started noticing patterns.

Certain times of day were better than others. Mornings were hit or miss—people were busy. Late mornings, around 10 or 11 AM, seemed better.

Certain types of businesses were more open to listening. Small local businesses. Startups. Places that probably couldn't afford a full marketing team.

And certain ways of phrasing the pitch worked better than others.

Talking about myself? Instant rejection.

Talking about them? Slightly better.

Leading with a specific observation about their business? That got a few people to pause and listen.

So I adjusted.

Instead of: *"Hi, I'm a copywriter looking for clients,"*

I started with: *"Hi, I noticed your website doesn't have clear information about your services on the homepage. I specialize in helping businesses like yours communicate their value more clearly. Would you be open to a quick conversation?"*

Not perfect. But better.

And occasionally—*occasionally*—someone would say, "Okay, tell me more."

Those moments were gold.

Not because they always turned into clients. Most of them didn't.

But because it meant I'd gotten past the first barrier.

They were listening.

And if they were listening, I had a chance.

One call in particular stands out.

It was maybe my fiftieth call overall. I'd been doing this for about a week at this point.

I called a small business—some kind of local service provider, I don't remember exactly what.

The owner picked up.

I gave my pitch.

And instead of immediately shutting me down, he said:

"Okay. What exactly do you do?"

I explained. Copywriting. Marketing. Helping businesses communicate better with potential customers.

He asked a few questions. What kind of results could I deliver? How much did I charge? Did I have examples?

I answered as best I could.

Tried to sound confident even though my heart was racing.

And at the end of the conversation, he said:

"Let me think about it. Send me an email with more details and we'll go from there."

It wasn't a yes.

But it wasn't a no.

I sent the email that same day.

Wrote it carefully. Included samples of my work. Explained how I could help his specific business.

And then I waited.

A day passed. Nothing.

Two days. Nothing.

A week.

Nothing.

He never responded.

That hurt more than the immediate rejections.

Because for a moment, I'd thought maybe this was it. Maybe this was the one.

And then... nothing.

Just silence.

But I didn't stop calling.

I kept going.

Sixty calls. Seventy. Eighty.

Most were rejections.

A few were polite conversations that went nowhere.

One or two were people who seemed genuinely interested but never followed up.

And the whole time, life in that tiny room continued.

The electricity still cut out.

The water still stopped running randomly.

I still woke up with back pain.

We still struggled to afford food some weeks.

But I kept calling.

Because I'd learned something important by this point:

Volume matters.

When you're starting from zero, when you have no reputation and no proof, you can't rely on a perfect pitch or a perfect offer.

You have to rely on numbers.

You have to make enough calls that eventually, statistically, someone says yes.

Not because you're the best.

But because you happened to call at the right time, with the right offer, to the right person who happened to need exactly what you were offering.

I also learned that rejection isn't personal.

Most of the people who said no weren't rejecting me.

They were rejecting the interruption. The timing. The offer.

They didn't know me. They couldn't reject me.

They were just protecting their time and their attention.

And once I understood that, rejection stopped hurting.

It just became part of the process.

Dial. Pitch. Rejected. Next.

No emotion. Just execution.

By late January, I'd made over a hundred calls.

I'd had maybe five real conversations.

I'd sent maybe three follow-up emails.

I'd gotten zero clients.

But I wasn't discouraged.

Because I could feel myself getting better.

My pitch was tighter. My voice was more confident. I handled objections more smoothly.

I was learning.

And I knew—*knew*—that if I just kept going, eventually one of these calls would land.

Then, in early February, it happened.

Call number one hundred and something.

I don't remember the exact number.

But I remember the conversation.

I called a small business. Local. Nothing fancy.

The owner picked up.

I gave my pitch.

And he said:

"Okay. What are your rates?"

I told him. ₹2,000 total. ₹1,000 upfront. ₹1,000 after I delivered the work.

There was a pause.

Then:

"Alright. Let's try it."

I almost didn't believe him.

"Really?"

"Yeah. Send me your details and we'll get started."

I hung up the phone and just sat there.

Staring at the wall.

Trying to process what had just happened.

After months of rejection.

After hundreds of failed attempts.

After every platform locking me out and every email going unanswered.

After cold calling over a hundred businesses and getting hung up on, ignored, or politely dismissed.

Someone had finally said yes.

It wasn't a huge deal. ₹2,000 isn't life-changing money.

But in that moment, it felt like everything.

Because it meant I wasn't insane.

It meant this could work.

It meant that if I kept going, if I kept calling, if I kept improving, I could actually build something.

I didn't tell my mother right away.

I wanted to make sure it was real first.

So I sent the client my details. We discussed the project. I started working immediately.

And a few days later, the first ₹1,000 came through.

That's when I told her.

She didn't say much. Just nodded. Smiled a little.

But I could see the relief in her eyes.

The same relief I felt.

Because for the first time in months, we had proof that this path—this terrifying, uncertain, exhausting path—might actually lead somewhere.

LESSONS I LEARNED

The first step is always the hardest, but it gets easier with repetition. That first call was terrifying. The second was slightly less so. By the hundredth, it was just routine. Fear doesn't disappear because you become fearless. It disappears because you do the thing enough times that it stops being special. If something scares you, the solution isn't to wait until you're not scared. It's to do it scared, over and over, until scared becomes normal.

Volume beats perfection when you're starting from zero. I didn't get my first client because I had the perfect pitch. I got it because I made enough calls that eventually I

reached someone who needed what I offered at exactly the right time. When you have no reputation, no portfolio, no social proof, you can't rely on quality alone. You need quantity. Make enough attempts and the numbers start working in your favor.

Rejection is information, not judgment. Most people who said no weren't rejecting me personally. They were rejecting the timing, the offer, the interruption. Once I stopped taking it personally, rejection stopped hurting. It just became data. This approach didn't work. This time of day didn't work. This type of business didn't work. Adjust and try again.

Getting better matters more than getting results immediately. I made over a hundred calls before getting a yes. But by call one hundred, I was significantly better than I was at call one. My pitch was clearer. My confidence was higher. I handled objections more smoothly. Even without clients, I was improving. And that improvement made the eventual yes inevitable.

You only need one yes to prove it works. Before that first client, I had no proof. I was operating on belief alone. But after that one yes, everything changed. I had evidence. I knew the model worked. I knew that if I kept doing this, more yeses would come. One success doesn't make you successful. But it proves that success is possible. And sometimes, that's all you need to keep going.

I had my first client.

₹2,000 total.

₹1,000 upfront. ₹1,000 after delivery.

It wasn't much.

But it was everything.

Because it meant that after months of failure, something had finally worked.

And if it worked once, it could work again.

Next: Chapter 13 — Signing the First Client

CHAPTER 13

Signing the First Client

There's a specific kind of relief that comes with your first yes.

Not excitement. Not celebration.

Just... relief.

The kind that makes your shoulders drop and your breath come a little easier.

The kind that says: *Okay. This is real. I'm not crazy. This can actually work.*

That's what I felt when I signed my first client.

It was late january 2026.

I'd been cold calling for weeks at this point. Over a hundred calls. Maybe closer to a hundred and fifty.

Most had ended in immediate rejection.

A handful had turned into brief conversations that went nowhere.

A few had seemed promising but fizzled out when I followed up.

And then there was this one.

I don't remember exactly which number it was in the sequence.

But I remember the call.

I'd found the business online—a small local service provider. The kind of business that probably didn't have a marketing team. The kind that might actually need help.

I dialed.

The phone rang a few times.

Then someone picked up.

"Hello?"

I launched into my pitch. I'd refined it by this point. Kept it short. Focused on them, not me.

"Hi, is this [Business Name]? My name is Aryan. I noticed your business online and I think I might be able to help you get more customers through better marketing. Do you have a minute to talk?"

There was a pause.

But not the kind of pause that comes before a rejection.

A different kind. The kind that means they're actually considering it.

"What kind of marketing?"

That question—*What kind of marketing?*—was the best thing I'd heard in weeks.

Because it meant they were listening.

It meant I'd gotten past the first barrier.

I explained. Copywriting. Website content. Email campaigns AI ads.. Anything that helped businesses communicate their value more clearly to potential customers.

"And how much do you charge?"

This was the moment that usually killed conversations.

I'd learned by now that if I said a number that was too high, people would immediately shut down.

But if I said a number that was too low, they wouldn't take me seriously.

I'd settled on ₹2,000 as a starting rate. Not expensive, but not trivial either.

"₹2,000 total. He said Half upfront, half after I deliver the work."

Another pause.

I held my breath.

I almost didn't believe what I'd just heard.

"Really?"

"Yeah. Send me your details and we can get started."

I tried to keep my voice steady. Professional. Like this was routine.

"Great. I'll send you an email right now with everything you need. Thank you."

We wrapped up the call. I hung up.

And then I just sat there.

Staring at my phone.

Trying to process what had just happened.

After months of rejection.

After being locked out of every platform.

After sending hundreds of emails that went unanswered.

After making over a hundred cold calls that led nowhere.

Someone had finally said yes.

I didn't celebrate.

I didn't tell my mother yet.

I didn't even let myself feel excited.

Because I knew from experience that things could still fall apart.

People change their minds. They ghost you. They say yes and then disappear.

So instead of celebrating, I got to work.

I opened my laptop and drafted an email.

Professional. Clear. Friendly but not too casual.

I outlined the project. Confirmed the scope. Explained the payment structure—₹1,000 upfront, ₹1,000 upon completion.

I included my payment details.

And I sent it.

Then I waited.

An hour later, I got a response.

The client confirmed everything. Agreed to the terms. Asked a few clarifying questions about what I'd deliver.

I answered them immediately.

And then, the next day, the first payment came through.

₹1,000.

I checked my account three times to make sure it was real.

It was.

That's when I told my mother.

She was sitting on the mattress, folding clothes.

I walked over and sat down next to her.

"I got a client."

She looked up.

"What?"

"A client. Someone hired me to do work. They paid ₹1,000 upfront. I'll get another ₹1,000 when I finish."

For a moment, she didn't say anything.

Then she reached over and put her hand on my shoulder.

"That's good, beta. That's really good."

Her voice was quiet. Steady.

But I could see what it meant to her.

Not just the money—though that mattered.

But the proof.

Proof that I wasn't wasting my time.

Proof that maybe, just maybe, this crazy path I'd chosen was actually leading somewhere.

I spent the next few days working on the project.

Writing copy for the client's website. Editing it. Refining it. Making sure every word was as clear and persuasive as I could make it.

I didn't have fancy tools. No expensive software. Just Google Docs and whatever free resources I could find online.

But I put everything I had into it.

Because this wasn't just about delivering good work.

This was about proving to myself that I could do this.

That I could take someone's money, deliver value, and leave them satisfied enough to maybe hire me again or refer me to someone else.

I delivered the work about a week later.

Sent it over. Explained what I'd written and why. Asked if they wanted any revisions.

The client reviewed it and came back with a few small changes.

I made them immediately.

And then, a day later, they approved everything.

"Looks good. I'll send the rest of the payment now."

The second ₹1,000 came through the next day.

₹2,000 total.

My first complete client transaction.

From cold call to delivery to payment.

I'd done it.

₹2,000 doesn't sound like much.

I know that.

For a lot of people, that's a nice dinner. A pair of shoes. A few hours of work.

But for me, in that tiny room, with electricity cutting out and water running inconsistently and food being a daily question mark, ₹2,000 was everything.

It was groceries for two weeks.

It was rent covered.

It was proof that I could generate income from nothing but a laptop and a skill I'd taught myself.

But more than the money, it was the psychological shift.

Before that client, I was operating on belief.

Belief that if I just kept trying, something would work.

Belief that self-education could translate into real income.

Belief that I wasn't wasting my time.

But belief is fragile. It cracks under pressure. It wavers when you're tired and broke and staring at your hundredth rejection.

After that client, belief became evidence.

I had proof.

I knew the model worked.

I knew that cold calling led to conversations.

I knew that conversations led to clients.

I knew that delivering good work led to payment.

And I knew that if I'd done it once, I could do it again.

So I kept calling.

Not with the same desperation as before.

But with confidence.

Because now I knew what a yes sounded like.

I knew what good conversations felt like.

I knew how to handle objections, how to close, how to deliver.

The second client came a week later.

Then a third.

Then a fourth.

Not all at once. Not a flood.

But steadily.

Each one proof that this wasn't a fluke.

Each one adding a little more money to our account.

Each one making life in that tiny room just a little more bearable.

I started thinking differently about what I was building.

This wasn't just freelancing anymore.

This wasn't just me trading time for money.

This was the foundation of something bigger.

A business.

A real business.

Something I could name. Something I could build systems around. Something that could grow beyond just me making cold calls.

That's when the idea for ARISE AI started to take shape.

Not all at once. Not with a grand vision or a detailed plan.

Just a quiet realization that if I was going to do this seriously, I needed to treat it seriously.

I needed a name. A brand. A clear offer.

I needed to stop thinking of myself as a desperate kid trying to make rent and start thinking of myself as someone building something that could last.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Before ARISE AI became real, before I built systems and processes and a philosophy, I had to survive.

I had to prove—to myself and to my mother—that this could work.

And that first client, that ₹2,000, was the moment everything shifted.

From hoping it would work.

To knowing it could.

LESSONS I LEARNED

Your first client doesn't have to be perfect—it just has to be real. I didn't land some huge company. I didn't sign a five-figure deal. I got ₹2,000 from a small local business. And that was enough. Because it proved the model worked. When you're starting, don't hold out for the perfect client. Just get one real transaction. Prove to yourself that value can be exchanged. Everything else builds from there.

Momentum starts with one small win. Before that first client, I was grinding with no proof that it would work. After that first client, everything felt different. I had evidence. I had confidence. I had momentum. One win doesn't solve all your problems. But it changes the energy you bring to the next attempt. And that energy compounds.

Deliver more than expected, even when you're desperate. I could have rushed the work. Delivered something mediocre. Taken the money and moved on. But I knew that first client would set the tone for everything that came after. So I treated it like it was a million-dollar deal. I put in the effort. I made revisions. I delivered quality. And that's why they paid the second half immediately and left satisfied. Your first client is your proof of concept. Make it count.

Payment isn't just money—it's validation. That ₹2,000 meant we could eat and pay rent. But more importantly, it meant someone valued what I could do. Someone had a problem. I solved it. They paid me. That simple exchange validated months of self-education and effort. Never underestimate the psychological power of your first payment. It transforms you from someone who's "trying" to someone who's "doing."

The gap between zero clients and one client is the hardest gap to cross. Going from zero to one is exponentially harder than going from one to ten. Because zero means you have no proof, no testimonials, no case studies, no word-of-mouth. You're selling on potential alone. But once you cross that gap, once you have that first yes,

everything changes. You have a reference point. You can say "I've done this before." That first client is the hardest one you'll ever get. And also the most important.

I had crossed the gap.

From zero to one.

From belief to evidence.

From hope to proof.

And now, with that foundation in place, I could start building something real.

Something that wasn't just about survival.

Something that could actually grow.

I didn't have a name for it yet.

I didn't have a clear vision.

But I had momentum.

And I had a plan.

Keep calling. Keep delivering. Keep learning.

And slowly, one client at a time, build something that mattered.

Next: Chapter 14 — Building ARISE AI

CHAPTER 14

Building ARISE AI

The difference between freelancing and building a business is intention.

When you're freelancing, you're trading time for money. You find a client, do the work, get paid, and then you start over.

When you're building a business, you're creating something that can exist beyond individual transactions. Something with a name, a philosophy, a system.

Something that can grow.

In early 2026, I made the shift from freelancing to building a business.

And that business became ARISE AI.

The name came first.

I wanted something that represented what I was trying to do. Not just make money. Not just survive.

But rise above the circumstances I'd been born into.

ARISE.

It felt right.

Simple. Clear. Aspirational without being pretentious.

And the "AI" part wasn't just about artificial intelligence—though that was part of it.

It was about the future. About using modern tools and technology to help businesses grow.

About being forward-thinking, even when I was operating from a tiny room with inconsistent electricity.

ARISE AI.

That's what I called it.

But a name is just a name.

The real work was figuring out what ARISE AI actually *was*.

What did we do? Who did we serve? What made us different from every other marketing freelancer or agency out there?

I spent weeks thinking about this.

Not in some strategic planning session. I didn't have a whiteboard or a business partner to brainstorm with.

I just thought about it while I worked. While I made calls. While I lay awake on that thin mattress at night, staring at the ceiling.

Here's what I knew:

I was good at copywriting. I understood how to communicate value clearly. How to write in a way that connected with people.

I understood business fundamentals. Not from a textbook, but from months of self-education. I knew how funnels worked, how marketing psychology worked, how to turn attention into action.

And I understood pain.

I knew what it felt like to start from nothing. To have no resources. To face rejection over and over again.

I knew what small business owners were going through because I was going through it too.

So I decided that ARISE AI would focus on helping small businesses—the kind that didn't have massive marketing budgets, the kind that couldn't afford big agencies, the kind that needed someone who understood what it was like to operate on the edge.

We'd offer copywriting. Marketing strategy. AI-powered tools and automation where it made sense.

But more than that, we'd offer clarity.

Because the biggest problem I'd noticed with small businesses wasn't that they didn't know marketing existed.

It was that they didn't know how to communicate what they did in a way that made people care.

Their websites were cluttered. Their messaging was vague. Their value propositions were buried under jargon.

And I could fix that.

I built a simple website.

Not fancy. I still couldn't afford a premium domain or expensive design tools.

But I used free website builders. Found a clean template. Wrote clear copy that explained what we did and who we helped.

I made sure every word on that site was intentional.

No fluff. No jargon. Just simple, direct language that told potential clients exactly what they'd get if they worked with us.

I published it.

And for the first time, ARISE AI existed as more than just an idea in my head.

It was real.

But a website alone doesn't bring clients.

I still had to do the work.

So I kept cold calling.

But now, instead of saying, "Hi, I'm Aryan and I do copywriting," I said, "Hi, I'm calling from ARISE AI. We help small businesses communicate their value more clearly and attract more customers."

It was a small change.

But it made a difference.

Because now I wasn't just a kid offering a service.

I was representing something. A brand. A business.

And people responded to that.

Clients started coming more regularly.

Not a flood. Not overnight success.

But steady.

One client led to another. Word of mouth started to spread—slowly, quietly, but it was happening.

Someone I'd worked with would mention me to a colleague. A business owner would refer me to another business owner.

Each project I completed became proof that I could deliver.

Each satisfied client became a potential referral.

And slowly, the foundation started to solidify.

I also started thinking about systems.

Because I realized that if I wanted ARISE AI to grow, I couldn't just keep doing everything manually.

I needed processes. Templates. Repeatable workflows.

So I created them.

I built a simple onboarding process for new clients. A questionnaire they'd fill out so I understood their business before we even started.

I created templates for common types of copy—landing pages, email sequences, product descriptions.

Not to copy-paste blindly, but to give myself a starting structure so I wasn't starting from scratch every time.

I built a system for managing projects. Nothing fancy. Just a spreadsheet where I tracked deadlines, deliverables, payments.

These weren't revolutionary. They weren't complex.

But they made everything smoother.

They freed up mental space so I could focus on the creative work instead of constantly reinventing the wheel.

Around this time, I also started developing a philosophy.

Not a marketing philosophy. A life philosophy.

Because I realized that what I was building wasn't just about business.

It was about proving something.

Proving that you don't need a degree to create value.

That you don't need permission to start.

That self-education and relentless execution can take you further than credentials ever will.

That pain can become purpose if you channel it correctly.

I started writing down the principles that were guiding me.

Things like:

Nobody builds a business with only one problem. Every entrepreneur carries another battle alongside the business itself.

For some, it's family. For others, money. For others, addiction or self-doubt.

Business is never the only problem.

Your second problem is different from everyone else's.

Your responsibility is to solve both.

Defeat the defeat before the defeat defeats you.

This became my mantra.

Because I realized that most failures happen not because the obstacle is insurmountable, but because we give up before we even try to overcome it.

We defeat ourselves mentally before reality defeats us physically.

And if you can change that—if you can fight the internal defeat first—you give yourself a real chance.

Skills compound. Credentials expire.

I didn't have a degree. I didn't have certifications.

But I had skills. Real, tested, proven skills.

And unlike credentials, which become outdated, skills compound over time.

Every project made me better. Every client taught me something new.

The learning never stopped.

I started sharing these ideas online.

Not to build a following—I didn't have time for that.

But because I wanted to document what I was learning. To clarify my own thinking. To leave a record of the journey.

I'd post occasionally on whatever platforms hadn't banned me yet. Short thoughts. Lessons learned. Observations about business and life.

Most of them got ignored.

But a few started getting small amounts of engagement.

A like here. A comment there.

It wasn't much.

But it was proof that maybe, eventually, this philosophy could resonate with others who were going through similar struggles.

By mid-2026, ARISE AI was real.

Not huge. Not famous. Not generating life-changing revenue.

But real.

We had clients. We had a process. We had a reputation—small, but growing.

And we had a mission.

To help small businesses grow. To prove that starting from nothing is possible. To build something that mattered.

I still lived in that tiny room.

The electricity still cut out. The water still stopped running. My back still hurt every morning.

But now, when I woke up, I wasn't waking up to desperation.

I was waking up to purpose.

I had something to build. Something to protect. Something that was mine.

And that feeling—that sense of ownership, of agency, of forward motion—was worth more than any amount of comfort.

ARISE AI became more than a business.

It became proof.

Proof that self-education works.

Proof that you don't need a traditional path.

Proof that if you refuse to quit, if you keep learning and executing and adapting, you can build something real.

It became a symbol of everything I'd survived to get to this point.

The chaos at home. The escape. The poverty. The rejection. The loss.

All of it had led here.

To a fifteen-year-old running a small but growing business from a room barely big enough to stand in.

And I wasn't done.

Not even close.

Because ARISE AI wasn't the destination.

It was just the beginning.

The foundation I'd use to build something even bigger. Something that could help more people. Something that could prove, on a larger scale, that where you start doesn't determine where you finish.

But before I could think about the future, I needed to solidify the present.

I needed to define, clearly, what I believed about business, about work, about life.

I needed to articulate the philosophy that had carried me this far.

Not for marketing purposes.

But for clarity.

For myself.

And for anyone else who might be starting from zero, wondering if it's even possible.

LESSONS I LEARNED

A business is just freelancing plus systems. The work I was doing as ARISE AI wasn't fundamentally different from what I'd been doing as a freelancer. I was still writing copy. Still working with clients. But now I had templates, processes, and onboarding workflows. Those systems made everything more efficient and allowed me to take on more clients without burning out. Don't wait until you're huge to build systems. Build them early, even when they feel unnecessary. They'll pay off faster than you think.

Your philosophy becomes your differentiator. There are thousands of copywriters. Thousands of marketers. What made ARISE AI different wasn't just the service. It was the philosophy behind it. The belief that skills matter more than credentials. That starting from nothing is possible. That pain can become purpose. When you're competing in a crowded market, your philosophy is what makes you memorable.

Start before you're ready, but professionalize as you go. I didn't wait until I had a perfect website or a detailed business plan. I started with cold calls and a Gmail account. But as I went, I made it more professional. Added a website. Created a brand. Built systems. You don't need to start perfect. But you do need to improve continuously. Professionalism is a process, not a prerequisite.

Documentation is underrated. Writing down my principles, my processes, my lessons learned—it clarified my own thinking. It forced me to articulate what I believed and why. And later, it became content I could share with others. If you're building something, document the journey. Write down what you learn. Not for an audience. For yourself. The audience will come later.

Ownership changes everything. When I was freelancing, I was just surviving. When I started building ARISE AI, I was creating something that belonged to me. That shift—from trading time for money to building an asset—changed my entire psychology. I worked harder. I cared more. I thought long-term instead of just getting through the day. If you want to sustain effort over years, not just months, you need ownership. You need skin in the game.

ARISE AI was real now.

Small, but real.

A business with clients, systems, a philosophy, and a mission.

But I knew that to grow it, to make it sustainable, I needed to be clear about what I believed.

Not just what services we offered.

But why we existed.

What we stood for.

What made us different.

And that meant articulating a philosophy that went deeper than marketing tactics.

A philosophy about work, pain, purpose, and what it actually takes to build something when you start from nothing.

Next: Chapter 15 — The Philosophy Behind Everything

CHAPTER 15

The Philosophy Behind Everything

I've never been good at pretending things are easier than they are.

Maybe that's because I've lived through enough hard things that sugarcoating them feels dishonest.

Or maybe it's because I believe people deserve the truth, even when the truth is uncomfortable.

Either way, the philosophy behind ARISE AI—and behind everything I've built—isn't about shortcuts or hacks or secrets.

It's about reality.

The reality of what it actually takes to build something when you start from nothing.

Let me start with the most important thing I've learned:

Nobody builds a business with only one problem.

This might be the single most important realization I've had.

When I was struggling to get my first client, I wasn't just dealing with business problems.

I was dealing with poverty. Grief. Instability. Exhaustion.

I was living in a tiny room with unreliable electricity, wondering if we'd have enough money for food next week.

I was processing the loss of my father while trying to make cold calls.

I was carrying the weight of being responsible for my mother's survival at fifteen years old.

Business wasn't the only problem.

It was never the only problem.

And once I understood that, I stopped comparing myself to other entrepreneurs who seemed to have it all figured out.

Because I realized they were carrying something too.

Maybe it was family issues. Maybe it was debt. Maybe it was addiction or mental health struggles or relationship problems.

Everyone has a second problem.

The entrepreneur building a startup while dealing with a divorce.

The freelancer trying to grow their business while caring for a sick parent.

The founder fighting imposter syndrome while raising millions of dollars.

Everyone is carrying something.

Your second problem is different from everyone else's.

And your responsibility isn't to pretend it doesn't exist.

It's to solve both.

The business problem *and* the life problem.

At the same time.

Because life doesn't pause while you build.

The second principle that guides everything I do is this:

Defeat the defeat before the defeat defeats you.

I came up with this phrase during one of the hardest weeks in late 2025.

I'd been rejected by platforms. Ignored by potential clients. Dealing with constant electricity cuts and financial stress.

And I noticed something.

Most of the time, I wasn't actually being defeated by external circumstances.

I was being defeated by my own mind.

I'd see an obstacle and immediately assume it was insurmountable.

I'd face rejection and tell myself, "This will never work."

I'd experience a setback and spiral into, "I'm not good enough. I should just give up."

The defeat was happening internally before the external situation even had a chance to play out.

And I realized: if I could control that internal defeat, if I could stop my mind from giving up before my body did, I'd have a real chance.

So I started treating my thoughts like enemies in a battle.

When the thought came: *This is impossible*, I'd counter it with: *I don't know that yet. Let me try first.*

When the thought came: *You're going to fail*, I'd counter it with: *Maybe. But I'm not going to defeat myself before reality does.*

When the thought came: *You're not qualified*, I'd counter it with: *Qualified according to who? I'm learning. That's enough.*

Defeating the internal defeat became a daily practice.

And it saved me.

Because external obstacles are real. They're hard. They're often unfair.

But internal defeat is the thing that stops you from even trying to overcome them.

The third principle:

Skills compound. Credentials expire.

I don't have a degree.

I dropped out of ninth grade.

By traditional standards, I'm not qualified to do anything.

But I have skills.

Real, tested, proven skills.

Copywriting. Marketing. Sales. Communication. Discipline. Resilience.

And here's the thing about skills: they compound.

Every project makes me better. Every client teaches me something new. Every failure shows me what doesn't work.

Skills build on each other. They snowball. They create momentum.

Credentials, on the other hand, are static.

You get a degree and it sits on a resume. It might open a door initially, but it doesn't grow. It doesn't adapt. And over time, it becomes outdated.

A degree from ten years ago doesn't mean you're still learning.

But a skill you've been practicing for ten years? That's mastery.

I chose skills over credentials.

Not because I thought credentials were worthless.

But because I didn't have access to them.

And I refused to let that stop me.

So I taught myself. I practiced. I executed. I failed. I improved.

And over time, the skills became more valuable than any piece of paper ever could have been.

The fourth principle:

Action is the only antidote to helplessness.

There were so many moments when I felt completely powerless.

When my father died and I couldn't do anything about it.

When the electricity cut out and I couldn't work.

When platforms rejected me and I had no recourse.

In those moments, it's easy to sink into helplessness. To feel like a victim of circumstances beyond your control.

And sometimes, that feeling is justified.

Sometimes, you really are powerless in certain situations.

But I learned that even when you can't control the situation, you can control your response.

You can't control whether the electricity stays on. But you can control whether you use the time it's on effectively.

You can't control whether a platform approves you. But you can control whether you find another path.

You can't control whether someone says yes. But you can control how many people you ask.

Action doesn't solve everything.

But it breaks the paralysis.

It gives you agency in a situation that feels hopeless.

And agency, even small agency, is the antidote to helplessness.

The fifth principle:

Start before you're ready. Improve as you go.

I wasn't ready to make my first cold call. I barely knew what I was doing.

I wasn't ready to take on my first client. I was still learning copywriting.

I wasn't ready to start ARISE AI. I didn't have a business plan or funding or a team.

But I started anyway.

Because waiting until you're ready is just another form of procrastination.

You'll never feel fully prepared. You'll never have all the answers. You'll never eliminate all the risks.

If you wait for perfect conditions, you'll wait forever.

So you start messy. You start scared. You start incomplete.

And you improve as you go.

You learn by doing. You get better through repetition. You build confidence through small wins.

Readiness isn't a prerequisite for starting.

It's a byproduct of starting.

The sixth principle:

Your current circumstances don't define your capacity.

I was living in a ten-by-twelve-foot room.

Sleeping on a thin mattress on the floor.

Dealing with electricity cuts and water shortages.

Skipping meals to save money.

By any objective measure, those were terrible conditions for building a business.

But I built one anyway.

Because I realized that capacity isn't determined by your environment.

It's determined by your willingness to work with what you have.

Some of the most successful people in history built empires from prison cells, hospital beds, and tiny apartments.

What mattered wasn't where they were.

It was what they did with what they had.

I had a laptop. I had internet access—unreliable, but there.

I had time. I had a functioning brain.

That was enough.

Not comfortable. Not ideal.

But enough.

And I refused to use my circumstances as an excuse to stop trying.

The seventh principle:

Pain can become purpose if you channel it correctly.

I didn't choose the childhood I had. I didn't choose to leave home twice. I didn't choose to lose my father.

I didn't choose poverty or instability or any of the hardships I went through.

But I did choose what to do with them.

I could have let the pain destroy me. I could have turned bitter. I could have given up and blamed the world for being unfair.

And honestly, there were moments when I wanted to.

But instead, I chose to channel that pain into purpose.

Every rejection became fuel.

Every setback became a lesson.

Every hardship became proof that I could survive harder things than I thought.

Pain doesn't automatically become purpose. That's a choice you have to make.

But if you make that choice—if you decide to use what hurt you as fuel for what you're building—it transforms everything.

The pain doesn't disappear.

But it stops being meaningless.

It becomes the foundation of your strength.

These principles—these beliefs—aren't just philosophical ideas.

They're the things that kept me alive during the hardest months of my life.

They're the things I come back to when I'm tired or discouraged or facing something that feels impossible.

They're the operating system behind ARISE AI.

Not just what we do, but why we do it and how we think about it.

And I share them not because I think I have everything figured out.

I don't.

I'm fifteen. I'm still building. I'm still learning. I'm still making mistakes.

But I share them because I know there are other people out there who are starting from zero.

People who feel like the world wasn't built for them.

People who've been told they're not qualified, not ready, not enough.

People who are carrying a second problem alongside their business and wondering if it's even possible to solve both.

And I want them to know:

It is possible.

Not easy. Not quick. Not guaranteed.

But possible.

If you're willing to do the work.

If you're willing to start before you're ready.

If you're willing to defeat the internal defeat.

If you're willing to build skills instead of waiting for credentials.

If you're willing to take action even when you feel helpless.

Then you have a chance.

A real chance.

This philosophy isn't just about business.

It's about life.

About how you show up when things are hard.

About what you do when every door is closed.

About whether you let circumstances define you or whether you define yourself despite them.

I'm still figuring it out.

But so far, it's working.

And I plan to keep building on it.

LESSONS I LEARNED

Philosophy isn't theoretical—it's operational. These principles aren't things I thought about in abstract. They're the rules I used to survive and build. They're the mental models that guided my decisions when everything else was uncertain. Your philosophy isn't what you say you believe. It's what you do when no one's watching and everything is hard.

Clarity comes from articulating what you already know. I didn't invent these principles in a strategic planning session. I lived them first, often without realizing it. Writing them down forced me to articulate what I'd already learned through experience. And once I articulated them, they became more powerful. They went from instinct to intention. If you're building something, take time to write down what you believe. It clarifies your thinking and strengthens your resolve.

Your philosophy becomes your brand. People don't just buy services. They buy the beliefs behind those services. The reason some clients choose ARISE AI over other options isn't because we're the cheapest or the most experienced. It's because they resonate with the philosophy. They believe what we believe. And that creates loyalty that pricing never could.

Pain without purpose is just suffering. Pain with purpose is growth. I went through hard things. Really hard things. But because I chose to channel that pain into building something, it stopped being purely destructive. It became instructive. It became fuel. That doesn't mean the pain didn't hurt. It did. But it means the pain wasn't wasted.

You don't need permission to have a philosophy. I'm fifteen. I don't have a PhD. I haven't built a billion-dollar company. By traditional standards, I have no authority to talk about business or life philosophy. But I've lived through things most people haven't. I've learned lessons most people my age haven't had to learn. And that gives me the right to share what I know. You don't need credentials to have wisdom. You just need experience and the willingness to reflect on it.

This philosophy—these principles—will continue to evolve as I grow.

I'm sure I'll look back at this in ten years and see things I'd change or add or refine.

But right now, this is what I believe.

This is what guides me.

And this is what I'll keep building on.

Because ARISE AI isn't just a business.

It's a statement.

A statement that where you start doesn't determine where you finish.

That credentials matter less than capability.

That pain can become purpose.

That you can build something real even when the world tells you you're not ready.

And that the only person who can truly defeat you is yourself.

CHAPTER 16

The Road Ahead

I'm writing this in April 2026.

The same room. The same thin mattress. The same flickering light bulb overhead.

But everything feels different now.

Not because the circumstances have changed dramatically—they haven't.

But because I have.

Six months ago, I was making cold calls out of desperation, wondering if any of this would ever work.

Three months ago, I signed my first client and felt a fragile hope that maybe I wasn't crazy.

Now, ARISE AI is real. Small, but real. Growing, but still fragile.

I have clients. I have systems. I have a philosophy.

I have proof that this path—this impossible, unconventional, terrifying path—can actually work.

But I'm not at the finish line.

Not even close.

If anything, I'm just at the starting line.

The real starting line.

Here's what I know about where I am right now:

ARISE AI generates enough income to survive. Not thrive. Not yet. But survive.

We can pay rent. We can buy food. We're not skipping meals anymore.

The electricity still cuts out. The water still stops running. My back still hurts every morning.

But we're stable. For the first time in months, we're stable.

And stability, I've learned, is the foundation you need to build anything bigger.

But I'm not satisfied with stability.

Stability is the beginning, not the destination.

Because I didn't go through everything I went through just to survive.

I went through it to build something that matters.

Something that grows. Something that helps people. Something that proves what's possible when you refuse to quit.

And that means the road ahead is long.

Here's what I'm building toward:

I want ARISE AI to become a real company. Not just me freelancing under a brand name. A company with systems that work without me. With a team, eventually. With processes that can scale.

I want to help more businesses. Not just the handful I'm working with now. Dozens. Then hundreds. Businesses that are struggling to communicate their value, struggling to grow, struggling to survive—just like I was.

I want to prove, on a larger scale, that self-education works. That you don't need a traditional path. That starting from nothing isn't a disadvantage—it's just a different starting point.

And I want to share what I'm learning. Not to build a personal brand or become an influencer. But because I know there are other people out there going through what I went through. And if my story can help even one of them keep going when they want to quit, then it's worth sharing.

But I'm also realistic about what's ahead.

I know that building something real takes years, not months.

I know that I'm going to face obstacles I can't even imagine yet.

I know that I'm going to fail. A lot. Probably more than I've already failed.

I know that there will be moments when I'll want to quit. When the weight of it all feels unbearable.

And I know that the road from where I am to where I want to be is long, uncertain, and full of things I can't control.

But I also know this:

I've already survived things I didn't think I could survive.

I've already built things I didn't think I could build.

I've already proven—to myself, if no one else—that I can do hard things.

And that gives me confidence.

Not the kind of confidence that assumes success is guaranteed.

But the kind of confidence that says: *I can handle whatever comes next.*

There are specific things I'm working on right now.

Improving the services we offer. I'm not just doing copywriting anymore. I'm learning about AI tools, automation, systems that can help businesses operate more efficiently. I want ARISE AI to be at the intersection of marketing and technology—using modern tools to solve old problems.

Building better processes. Right now, everything still depends on me. If I get sick or burned out, everything stops. I need to build systems that can function without me constantly being the bottleneck. Templates. Workflows. Standard operating procedures. The boring stuff that makes scaling possible.

Developing my own skills. I'm still learning. Every single day. I'm studying psychology, persuasion, strategy, leadership. I'm watching how successful businesses operate. I'm reading case studies and analyzing what works. Because I know that the better I get, the more value I can deliver.

Documenting the journey. I'm writing more. Not just for clients, but for myself. Capturing lessons learned. Mistakes made. Wins celebrated. Because I want to remember this phase. And because I believe that someday, this documentation will be valuable to others.

But beyond the tactical work, I'm also thinking about something bigger.

Legacy.

I know that sounds grandiose for a fifteen-year-old running a small business from a tiny room.

But I can't help it.

Because I've realized that what I'm building isn't just about me.

It's about proving something.

Proving that the system—the traditional education system, the credentialing system, the system that tells you you need to follow a specific path—isn't the only way.

Proving that someone from my background, with my circumstances, can build something real.

Proving that pain doesn't have to be the end of the story. It can be the beginning.

And if I can prove that—if I can build something significant starting from where I started—then maybe it gives permission to other people to try.

Other kids who feel trapped by their circumstances.

Other dropouts who've been told they'll never amount to anything.

Other people who are carrying a second problem and wondering if they'll ever be able to solve both.

Maybe my story can be proof that they can.

I'm not naive about this.

I know that one person's success doesn't change a broken system.

I know that my story won't magically fix poverty or educational inequality or any of the structural issues that made my journey so hard.

But I also know that stories matter.

Representation matters.

Seeing someone who looks like you, who started where you started, who faced what you're facing—and seeing them succeed—that matters.

It doesn't solve everything.

But it plants a seed.

A seed that says: *Maybe I can too.*

So here's what the road ahead looks like for me:

In the next six months, I want to double the number of clients we're working with. Build better systems. Hire help if I can afford it. Move from survival to sustainable growth.

In the next year, I want ARISE AI to be profitable enough that my mother doesn't have to work anymore. I want her to rest. To recover from everything she's been through. To know that we're going to be okay.

In the next five years, I want to build something that employs people. That creates opportunities for others. That proves self-education and execution can compete with—and beat—traditional credentials.

In the next decade, I want to look back at this chapter of my life and see it as the foundation. The messy, painful, beautiful foundation of something much bigger.

But I'm not focused on ten years from now.

I'm focused on today.

On the client meeting I have this afternoon.

On the copy I need to write tomorrow.

On the cold calls I'll make next week.

Because I've learned that the future is built one day at a time.

One decision at a time.

One small action at a time.

And if I just keep doing the work—if I keep learning, executing, improving—the future will take care of itself.

I don't know how this story ends.

I'm still living it.

And that's the point.

This isn't a rags-to-riches story where the hero overcomes all obstacles and lives happily ever after.

This is a story about what it looks like to build something real when you start from nothing.

And the truth about building something real is that it's never finished.

There's no final chapter. No neat conclusion. No moment where you cross the finish line and everything is perfect.

There's just progress.

Messy, uneven, uncertain progress.

Two steps forward, one step back.

Wins mixed with losses.

Growth mixed with setbacks.

And through it all, the choice to keep going.

If you're reading this and you're in a similar position—starting from zero, carrying a second problem, wondering if it's even possible—I want you to know something:

I can't promise it'll work out.

I can't promise you'll succeed.

I can't promise the path will get easier.

But I can promise this:

If you don't try, you'll never know.

If you let fear or doubt or circumstance stop you before you even start, you guarantee failure.

But if you start—messy, scared, unprepared—you give yourself a chance.

Maybe it works. Maybe it doesn't.

But at least you'll know.

And you'll learn things along the way that no classroom could ever teach you.

So here's my advice, for what it's worth:

Start before you're ready.

You'll never feel fully prepared. Start anyway.

Learn in public.

Don't wait until you're an expert. Share what you're learning as you learn it.

Build skills, not credentials.

Focus on what you can do, not what degrees you have.

Defeat the internal defeat.

Your biggest enemy isn't the market or the competition or the circumstances. It's the voice in your head that says you can't. Fight that voice first.

Take action even when you feel helpless.

You might not be able to control the outcome. But you can control the effort.

Don't wait for perfect conditions.

They'll never come. Build with what you have.

Channel your pain into purpose.

Whatever you've been through, it doesn't have to define you. It can fuel you.

Remember: nobody builds with just one problem.

You're not alone in carrying something heavy. Everyone is. Your job is to keep building anyway.

I'm fifteen years old.

I dropped out of ninth grade.

I'm running a business from a room barely big enough to stand in.

I've been rejected more times than I can count.

I've lost people I love.

I've faced poverty, instability, and obstacles that felt insurmountable.

And I'm still here.

Still building.

Still learning.

Still moving forward.

ARISE AI is just getting started.

And so am I.

The road ahead is long.

But I'm not afraid of long roads anymore.

I'm afraid of staying still.

I'm afraid of wasting the pain I've already been through.

I'm afraid of looking back in ten years and wishing I'd tried harder.

So I'm going to keep going.

One day at a time.

One client at a time.

One lesson at a time.

Until this small thing becomes something bigger.

Until this story becomes proof.

Proof that it's possible.

That you can start from nothing and build something real.

That pain can become purpose.

That credentials are optional but capability is essential.

That the only person who can truly stop you is yourself.

I don't know where this road leads.

But I'm walking it anyway.

And if you're on a similar road, I hope our paths cross someday.

Until then, keep building.

Keep learning.

Keep going.

Because the world needs what you're building.

Even if you don't know it yet.

This is not the end of the story.

This is barely the beginning.

LESSONS I LEARNED

The gap between survival and growth requires patience. I'm stable now. But stability isn't success. It's the foundation for success. And building on that foundation takes time. Most people quit right here—right when they've stabilized—because they're tired of struggling and they think stable is enough. But if you want to build something significant, you have to push past comfortable stability into deliberate growth. That's where I am now.

Long-term thinking anchors short-term action. When I know where I want to be in five years, it's easier to decide what to do today. Long-term vision doesn't paralyze me—it clarifies me. It helps me say no to distractions and yes to things that compound. You don't need a perfect plan. But you need a direction. And that direction turns daily decisions from random to strategic.

Legacy isn't about fame—it's about impact. I don't need millions of people to know my name. I need the people I help to remember that they were helped. I need other kids starting from zero to see that it's possible. That's legacy. Not monuments or headlines. Just proof that someone walked this path and it led somewhere worth going.

Uncertainty is permanent—accept it and build anyway. I don't know if ARISE AI will become what I hope it becomes. I don't know if I'll achieve everything I'm aiming for. But waiting for certainty means never starting. The only way forward is to accept that I'll never have all the answers and build anyway. Uncertainty isn't a bug. It's a feature of anything worth building.

Progress isn't linear, and that's okay. Some weeks I'll land three clients. Other weeks I'll land zero. Some months will feel like massive growth. Others will feel like backsliding. That's normal. That's how building actually works. The myth of steady upward progress is what makes people quit. Real progress is messy, inconsistent, and nonlinear. As long as the overall trajectory is upward, the bumps don't matter.

The road ahead is uncertain.

But I've learned to be comfortable with uncertainty.

Because certainty is a luxury you don't get when you're building from zero.

All you get is the next step.

And the choice to take it.

I'm taking it.

Every single day.

And I'll keep taking it until this small thing becomes something significant.

Or until I learn something that leads me somewhere even better.

Either way, I'm moving forward.

And that's enough.

A Letter to Anyone Starting From Zero

If you've made it this far, thank you.

Thank you for spending your time with my story. With my struggles. With my philosophy. With my ideas about what's possible.

I know it's not the typical success memoir.

There's no dramatic turnaround. No neat ending. No moment where everything magically falls into place.

Because that's not how real life works.

If you're reading this book, I have to assume something about you:

You're starting from zero.

Or close to it.

Maybe you don't have money. Maybe you don't have a degree. Maybe you don't have connections or a plan or a clear path forward.

Maybe you're carrying a second problem—a family situation, a mental health struggle, a circumstance that makes building feel impossible.

Maybe you've been told you're not ready. Not qualified. Not enough.

Maybe you're lying in bed right now, staring at the ceiling, wondering if any of this will work.

If that's you, I want to tell you something.

I'm not special.

I know people say that and it sounds cliché. But I mean it.

I didn't have some secret advantage. I didn't have a rich family or a mentor or a lucky break.

I had a laptop. I had internet access. I had time.

And I had something else, something I didn't recognize until I needed it.

I had the refusal to quit.

That's it.

That's the only difference between me and the thousands of other people who could have done what I did.

I didn't stop.

Even when every platform rejected me. Even when every door closed. Even when the electricity cut out and the money ran out and the rejection piled up.

I just... didn't stop.

If you're starting from zero, here's what I want you to know:

You don't need permission to start.

No one has to approve your plan. No one has to validate your idea. No one has to tell you you're ready.

You can start right now. Messy. Scared. Uncertain.

Start anyway.

You don't need credentials to build skills.

The internet is free. YouTube is free. The lessons are out there.

You can learn copywriting, marketing, design, coding, sales—whatever you need.

You can become capable without a degree.

You can become excellent through practice, not paperwork.

You don't need perfect conditions to make progress.

The electricity might cut out. The money might run low. The circumstances might be terrible.

Build anyway.

Because perfect conditions don't exist. And if you wait for them, you'll wait forever.

You don't need to know the entire path to take the first step.

I didn't know ARISE AI would exist when I started trading. I didn't know I'd be writing this book when I was carrying water buckets down the street.

I just took the next step. Then the one after that.

That's all you need to do too.

I know it's hard.

I know there are days when giving up feels easier.

I know there are moments when you wonder if you're wasting your time.

I know there are nights when you lie awake, anxious and exhausted, wondering how you're going to make it through.

I've been there.

More times than I can count.

And I'm not going to tell you it gets easy. It doesn't.

But it does get clearer.

The more you do, the more you learn. The more you learn, the more confident you become. The more confident you become, the more you can handle.

It's a slow process. Slower than you want. Messier than you hoped.

But it works.

If you don't quit.

I want to leave you with a few things.

Not advice. Just thoughts. From someone who was where you are.

First: Your starting point doesn't determine your destination.

I was in a room with a thin mattress and unreliable electricity. I was broke, grieving, and uncertain.

I'm still not "successful" by most measures. But I'm building. I'm growing. I'm moving.

Where you start is just where you start. It's not where you finish.

Second: The pain you're carrying can become fuel.

I know it doesn't feel like it. I know it feels like the pain is destroying you.

But if you can channel it—if you can let it fuel what you're building instead of letting it paralyze you—it becomes one of your greatest assets.

Because pain teaches resilience. It teaches empathy. It teaches determination.

Don't waste it.

Use it.

Third: Every expert was once a beginner.

Every successful person you admire was once exactly where you are.

They were broke. They were scared. They were rejected. They failed.

The only difference is they kept going.

You can keep going too.

Fourth: You are not alone.

I felt alone for most of this journey. Like no one understood what I was going through. Like no one else was carrying this weight.

But the truth is, everyone is carrying something.

Everyone has a second problem. Everyone has a struggle they don't talk about.

You're not alone in your suffering. You're just not aware of everyone else's.

Fifth: Small progress is still progress.

Some days you'll feel like you're not moving at all. Like nothing is working. Like you're stuck.

But you're not stuck.

You're building, even if you can't see it.

Every email you send is practice. Every call you make is experience. Every failure is a lesson.

The progress is happening. Just slowly.

Keep going.

Sixth: Start before you're ready.

I'm saying this again because it's that important.

You will never feel ready. You will never have all the information. You will never eliminate all the risk.

Start anyway.

Start messy. Start scared. Start with whatever you have.

Because readiness is a myth. And waiting for it is just another form of giving up.

Seventh: You owe it to yourself to try.

Not to succeed. Not to become famous or wealthy or impressive.

Just to try.

Because you'll never know what could have been if you don't.

And living with "what if" is harder than living with "I tried and it didn't work."

At least when you try, you have a story.

At least when you try, you learn something.

At least when you try, you can look back and say: *I gave it everything I had.*

That's worth something.

Even if you fail.

I don't know who you are.

I don't know what you're going through.

I don't know if ARISE AI will become what I hope it becomes, or if this book will matter to anyone other than me.

But I know that if you're starting from zero, you're not alone.

I'm starting from zero too.

And I'm still going.

And if I can do it—if a fifteen-year-old dropout in a tiny room in India can build something real—then you can too.

Not because we're the same.

But because the only thing that matters is whether you keep going.

So keep going.

Even when it's hard.

Even when it doesn't work.

Even when you want to quit.

Keep going.

Because the world needs what you're building.

And you deserve to see it finished.

I started this book in that dark room, with no electricity, wondering if we'd make it.

I'm ending it in the same room.

But the light is on now.

And it's not going to go out.

If you want to follow my journey—my wins, my losses, what I'm learning, what I'm building—you can find me at:

thearise ai.com

I don't know what I'll be writing about when you get there.

But I'll be writing.

And I'll be building.

And I'll be proving, one day at a time, that it's possible.

Thank you for reading.

Now go start.

— Aryan Srivastav

April 2026

Uttar Pradesh, India

END

FINAL NOTES

About the Author

Aryan Srivastav is the founder of ARISE AI, a marketing and business solutions company helping small businesses grow through clear communication and modern tools. A self-taught entrepreneur who dropped out of ninth grade to support himself and his mother, Aryan is building proof that credentials are optional but capability is essential.

His journey—from binary trading to cold calling to building a real business—was documented in this memoir as a record of what's possible when you refuse to quit.

He's fifteen old. And he's just getting started.

This book was written as a documentation of a journey, not a destination. All events described are based on the author's personal experience. Names of certain individuals have been omitted to protect privacy. Revenue figures and timelines are accurate to the best of the author's knowledge at the time of writing.

This is not the end of the story.

This is barely the beginning.

Explore My Work

Personal Website
The complete home of my work, writing, mission, and future projects.
aryansrivastav.in

ARISE AI
Discover how we're helping businesses leverage AI systems, automation, and intelligent growth.
theariseai.com

The Trenches
Raw lessons, behind-the-scenes insights, failures, execution, and the realities of

building something from nothing.
trenches.aryansrivastav.in

ARISE AI University
Free resources, guides, and practical education on AI, business, and execution.
university.thearisеai.com

Stay Connected

If you'd like to follow the journey as it unfolds, here's where you'll find me.

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Medium
https://medium.com/@thearyansrivastav

Reddit
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Telegram
https://t.me/thearyansrivastav

TikTok
https://www.tiktok.com/@theariseai

Pinterest
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About.me
https://about.me/aryansrivastav

Gravatar
https://gravatar.com/thearyansrivastav

Carrd
https://aryansrivastav.carrd.co

Contra
https://contra.com/thearyansrivastav

Peerlist
https://peerlist.io/aryansrivastav

Let's Build Something That Matters.

Whether you're building your first business, learning AI, rebuilding your life, or simply refusing to give up—

Keep going.

One decision.

One skill.

One day.

One battle at a time.

I'll be building right alongside you.

— Aryan Srivastav

This is a work of nonfiction. The events described are based on the author's personal experiences and recollections. Some names or identifying details may have been changed to protect privacy where appropriate.

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This book is a personal memoir based on the author's own experiences, memories, and opinions.

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